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“I Don't Read No Books” : How Teachers Can Use Students' Literacy Stories to Change Literacy Lives.

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“I DON’T READ NO BOOKS.”

HOW TEACHERS CAN USE STUDENTS’ LITERACY STORIES
TO CHANGE LITERACY LIVES

by

Stephanie J. Malone

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Studies

(Teaching, Curriculum and Learning)

Under the Supervision of Professor Guy Trainin

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 2018

“I DON’T READ NO BOOKS.”

HOW TEACHERS CAN USE STUDENTS’ LITERACY STORIES
TO CHANGE LITERACY LIVES

Stephanie J. Malone, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 2018

Advisor: Guy Trainin

Practitioner knowledge, as the center for change in teacher education, is the heart of The Carnegie Project of the Educational Doctorate (CPED) program. Margaret Lata and Susan Wunder explain a key principal of CPED is to grow practitioners as change agents, through the development of a Problem of Practice. In their article, *Investing in the Formative Nature of Professional Learning: Redirecting, Mediating, and Generating Education Practice-as-Policy* (2012), they discuss how the capstone product that evolves from this Problem of Practice should impact the professional field by producing knowledge that informs and changes professional practice.

This Dissertation in Practice, *“I Don’t Read No Books.” How Teachers Can Use Students’ Literacy Stories to Change Literacy Lives*, explores my Problem of Practice: “How can I, a middle level reading teacher, discover my students’ stories and use those stories to improve learning?” This Dissertation in Practice focuses on literacy by encouraging educators to listen to and discover the stories of struggling readers and to use those stories to inform instructional practice. While there are several marketable literacy-based books on the market, the competing works focus on the teacher’s perspective teaching reading strategies to struggling readers. These resources, however, give little voice to our students.

A narrative inquiry study was conducted for twelve weeks in a remedial reading intervention class for seventh graders with a class size of ten students in an urban, Nebraska school district. Reading intervention consists of students who read independently at only the first to second grade reading level. Students often struggle with emergent literacy skills, such as decoding and letter identification, reading fluency and using active reading strategies - visualizing a picture while reading, predicting what will happen next, making connections, clarifying the unfamiliar, inferring, summarizing and asking questions about the story.

"I Don't Read No Books." *How Teachers Can Use Students' Literacy Stories to Change Literacy Lives* particularly addresses the student through detailed and specific student narratives and provides educators with strategies to uncover student stories and adapt instruction to fit those students' needs.

To my students. You taught me.

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My late grandmother always told me, “Stephanie, you have to have a mess before things can be right.” The writing of this book, meddling through the mess, would not have been possible without the support and guidance of so many.

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To my parents. You instilled in me determination and a passion to learn. You also remind me constantly of how stubborn I can be until I reach my goals. Thank you.

To my sister, Jacqueline. When I was too immersed in my writing to take a step back, you made things clearer for me. Your words, “Don’t think about getting done.

Think about doing your best job, so that yours will go farther,” nudged me forward when I needed a push. Thank you for the second pair of eyes. I am forever grateful to you.

To my family. My daughters, Schyler and Vin. Your notes warmed my heart and motivated me to write. Thank you for accepting when mommy could not play, even though your half smiles suggested otherwise. Let’s go build those Legos now!

To my husband, Christopher. You are my rock. When I doubted myself, you gave me hope. When I did not want to leave the house to write, you told me, “Go. Get out of here. You are working towards something great.” I hated you in those moments. Without you, this would have been a lot harder. *Really*. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

UNTETHERING TEACHING FRUSTRATION

Stubbornness fuels my passion. When I was ten, my mother, in her annual spring-cleaning marathon, deep cleaned my bed. Her method of deep cleaning involved stripping the bed of the sheets, vacuuming the mattress meticulously and then flipping and rotating it so that it would maintain shape. Afterwards, she made the bed with the summer linens. I did not like this ritual for some reason. After she was done and was distracted with something else, I awkwardly tried to flip my mattress back. My arms burned trying to lift it. How did she make it look so easy? Several times the mattress dropped from my grip and thumped onto the box spring. A few times I thought that maybe I should let the mattress (and my mother) win. But, then my stubbornness set in. I did not stop until I heard its final thump onto the box spring – the way I wanted it. Then I plopped myself on the bed, relieved.

Passion can drive what we do and help us become the best versions of ourselves. As a reading teacher for the past twelve years, I have learned students are stubborn and often lack passion to work hard to be good readers. Their stubbornness bumps against my stubbornness. This Introduction establishes a framework for how I began helping my stubborn struggling readers¹ improve their literacy skills through a conferencing system that allowed me to connect with students, gather their past literacy history, including family and school experiences, and use that information to design and tailor

¹ For the purposes of this book, I use the term “Struggling Reader” as a good thing, rather than having a negative connotation. To struggle is what we do when we experience difficulty. A productive struggle necessitates perseverance, critical thinking and engagement. Our students need to experience *productive* struggle. It might be hard and painful for them to let go of their stubbornness but necessary for them to become better readers.

individualized reading instruction. Section One describes the frustrations and problems that I encountered teaching struggling readers. Section Two explores how my choice (i.e. stubbornness) not to follow the standard curriculum led me to look closer at my students' literacy needs. Section Three explains the importance of this book and how it is organized.

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE AHEAD: MY TEACHING STORY

My first teaching experience with struggling readers began at an urban high school in 2008. I taught five sections of Reading Intervention to sixty students using a novel-based curriculum. Reading Intervention was a remedial reading class in my school district that supported students reading below grade level. The class met five days a week for a fifty-minute class period.

I felt frustrated when my struggling readers, slouched in their chairs, did not participate in class discussions of novels or hand in satisfactory written responses over comprehension questions. “Feed the seals” (offering candy as a reward) was the advice Mary, my mentor, shared with me during my first year of teaching high school reading. That was her way to engage students and her suggestion to me to help my adolescent, struggling readers become more engaged and motivated in their reading intervention class. Desperate for student engagement, I fed the seals. I asked a question and when a student responded, I tossed that particular student a Starburst. Their stubbornness towards reading created a passion to get candy. Unfortunately, feeding the seals as a strategy to engage and motivate my readers did not last long. I got tired of buying huge bags of Starburst candy, and it quickly proved to be ineffective. I was not improving their literacy skills and was barely motivating them for a single class period. My students needed to grow a real passion for reading.

My frustration with teaching a novel-based curriculum that lacked student engagement and methods to assess student literacy progress was not confined to the classroom or simply directed at my students. It made its way into meetings with teachers and parents whenever I was put on the spot regarding student progress. For instance,

during parent-teacher conferences or Individualized Educational Plan (“IEP”) meetings, parents or guardians would ask me a very reasonable question, “What is my child’s reading level?” As their child’s reading teacher, I should have been able to tell them. But, on some level, I had no clue. So, I blubbered my way through those conversations by explaining that since their child was placed in Reading Intervention, according to the District, their child was reading independently at a first to second grade level. A typical follow up question would be, “What are you doing to help my child get on grade level?” My stubbornness set in. Someone once again flipped my mattress and I felt I needed to be able to flip it back. I started to reevaluate my teaching approach.

From my formal educational experience, I knew that what I was teaching my struggling readers looked more like an English curriculum than a reading intervention course. I felt frustrated, ineffective and underprepared as a reading teacher. What I had learned during my undergraduate studies and was learning at that time in my master level courses on reading development was the exact opposite of what my school district required me to teach. In practice, I was simply reading a novel with students and having them answer comprehension questions. I was not teaching reading skills or strategies to help my students acquire or improve their literacy. Essentially, I had no access to their reading process, just their product.

After four years of teaching high school struggling readers, I took a reading position to teach middle school struggling readers within the same school district. I wanted to see if intervention earlier would be a better use of my strengths and help ensure that fewer students ended up in the same high school class. Each school year, I found myself questioning how I could improve my teaching practice, while working within the

constraints of a novel-based curriculum. I began to explore the root of my middle school struggling readers' resistance towards literacy in my classroom. I questioned if my students were struggling due to a cognitive learning disability, an affective struggle or perhaps both.

During the 2015 school year, I started my doctoral program to grow my practitioner knowledge and solve my problem of practice. One of my graduate courses, *Place Conscious Education*, encouraged me to explore the idea that place is where experiences begin and stories emerge. I had an aha! moment as a teacher, when I read Sharon Bishop's, *The Power of Place* (2004), and Susan Martin's, *Writing into the World: Writing Marathons for Teaching Writing, Place, and Advocacy* (2013). Both of these writers unpack the meaning of place by explaining the places we occupy never leave us because they live deep inside of us. Until we begin to *notice* those places, we never will truly understand that particular space we have occupied. Stubbornness informs what we do. It fuels our passions yet can prevent us from knowing our place and our students. It prevents us from turning mattresses even when we should. When I moved past feeling stuck and the attitudes such as, "I do not have the time;" "My students cannot do that;" or "My administration would never allow me to try this intervention," I grew the capability to uncover what I only suspected might be possible with students. I started to question what I could learn from my students if I paused to look deeply inside their stories.

I have taught in a school district where conferencing is not the primary focus to improve a student's missing literacy skills. At the time of writing this book, my district was in the middle of piloting a new reading curriculum for middle school students. The

reading curriculum focused on small group instruction with whole group lessons once or twice a week and required students to read Scholastic Short Reads® leveled passages. Previously, the reading curriculum was novel-based, whole group instruction, not connected to students needs or interests, and lacked attention to the teaching of skills and strategies. Both reading curriculums are ridged in that they require teachers to teach specific guidelines, yet are flexible in how the teacher delivers instruction. While for some teachers this flexibility of both curriculums is well received, others find the flexibility challenging. I appreciate the flexibility, as it allows me to adjust and change my teaching to fit the needs of my students.

Conferencing with students is not a new approach in the field of educational research, but a practice new to me. I realize my approach to grow students as readers, through a conferencing system is a rediscovery of old knowledge buried under the layers of curricula, district mandates, No Child Left Behind, and top down reading programs. The work from Nancy Atwell, *In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning* (1998), Carl Anderson, *How's It Going* (2000), Lucy Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Reading* (2001), Jennifer Serravallo and Gravity Goldberg, *Conferring with Readers* (2007), and Laura Robb, *Teaching Middle School Writers* (2010), continues to be my guiding post. Their work teaches educators how to setup reading or writing conference workshops, then listen to and guide students to improve their reading or writing skills.

With approval from my principal, I began working closely with one of my eighth-grade reading intervention classes to uncover my students' literacy needs. I individually met with students and interviewed them about their reading. Through our conversations, I

found students disliked reading because they “couldn’t get the picture inside their heads;” reading “was boring;” they didn’t understand “the point of reading;” or they “got stuck on big words.” Learning about who my struggling readers were as readers beyond my classroom helped me recognize the friction between what was taught and what *should* be taught to struggling adolescent readers. My students did not need a novel-based curriculum or direct instruction over skills and strategies. They needed me to notice them and provide effective literacy instruction tailored to fit their individual needs, which forced me to have conversations with my students about their literacy needs. That’s how we began conversations at the *beach*.

Teacher Talk #1

I have been fortunate to work with administrators who allowed me to do what is effective for my students, even when that means going against mandated district curriculum. While having supportive administrators makes doing what is right for students easier, I realize some teachers do not have this luxury in their classrooms. Whatever the case, I urge you to create open dialogue with your administration team. In my experience, administrators are open to change and will support instruction that is beneficial for students. However, if your administration is not open to change, refrain from being stubborn and instead find small opportunities to get to know your students, as well as those moments when you can put your spin on teaching. Also, as you read this book, keep in mind that it is only meant to support your teaching practice, not provide an alternative to district requirements. More on this later.

“LET’S GO TO THE BEACH:” CONVERSATIONS WITH AIDAN,**MARK, AND JESSICA**

Aidan: “I can’t get that picture inside my head, Miss.”

Seventh period. I stand outside Room 210 greeting both excited and reluctant students. By this time of day, most students do not want reading support; they want to go home. The tardy bell rings, and I see Aidan shuffle down the hallway wearing his bright blue hoodie, his bulging red binder in tow. “Good afternoon, Aidan.” I wait for his barely audible, irritated “Hi” as he walks past me entering our classroom. “Students, how are you?” My eighth graders are seated and begin sharing their days and after school plans. Aidan grabs his folder and tosses it onto his table and shoves himself into his seat. He sits slouched with his head resting on the bulging red binder for the entire fifty-minute class period.

Learning Aidan’s story was challenging. However, when he finally opened up, I realized that I had failed him. Instead of encouraging Aidan, I ignored him for the first semester. Reading my words now as a parent of two school-age children, I feel outraged and ashamed. How could a teacher just ignore a student? But as a teacher, I get it. I understand when to stay firm and to just walk away. To illustrate, as parents we stay firm in some situations and more flexible in others. I do not budge on bedtime. However, when my daughter wants to leave the house wearing mismatched clothing, I do not push her to change. Instead, I let her wear the outfit to avoid her breaking into a blubbery and angry mess. With Aidan, I learned when I could push him to do class work and when it was best to walk away, so he would not escalate and interfere with the classroom-learning environment. Choosing when to intervene and when to let go needs to be done

carefully; a student's choice becomes a habit harder and harder to break. With Aidan his choice to put his head down, rather than engage in learning, over time created a reading gap and one that he did not try to improve.

Some days, Aidan walked into the classroom, grabbed his red classroom folder, sat down and wanted to engage in conversation.

AIDAN: "I hate her."

TEACHER: "Hate who?"

AIDAN: "My mom."

TEACHER: "Why do you hate your mom?"

AIDAN: "She's making me do track, and I hate track."

On these days, he was open and I pushed him more. When he performed a simple learning task, such as writing vocabulary words, I often publicly praised him by saying something like "Aidan is our vocabulary king for the day." The rest of the class joined, cheering and clapping. He would smile and look down, not quite sure how to respond. Unfortunately, these moments were rare. My early interactions with Aidan typically went like this:

TEACHER: "Hi, Aidan. How are you today?"

AIDAN: "Leave me alone."

The tone of his voice told me to not push him. These days were challenging. Often, I was tired of his negative attitude. I wanted him to come into the classroom and just do the work. His tone told me it was not going to happen. So, I let him sleep the entire class period.

One day, a student in the class asked me, “Ms. Malone, what about Aidan? How do we get him to read?” Students had noticed Aidan’s withdrawal from class and that I was doing nothing. I was shamed into action and into noticing that I nearly gave up on Aidan. During the next weeks, I began reaching out to Aidan. I called him over to the beach (a lounge area with Adirondack chairs separated by a small round table in our classroom) to talk. Students find the beach less formal than the regular classroom seating, so I thought connecting with Aidan there would be more comfortable. Usually, Aidan ignored my requests to talk at the beach. However, at this point, I would not fail him anymore. When Aidan finally pulled himself up and shuffled over to the beach, I felt victorious. Even though it was a tiny step, something had budged and I could wiggle in and reach him. We did not read a story but talked about his family, what he does after school and (of course) soccer. Our conversations were a turning point for Aidan and for me as his teacher.



Figure 1: The Beach

Our beach chats became routine. After Aidan's classmates started their reading assignments, Aidan would walk over to the beach area without me asking. Our conversations focused on his interests, his family and his hopes for the future. I did not push Aidan to read until he grew comfortable with me. When I finally asked him if he wanted to start reading a story, his initial response was no. I did not press him. The following day, I asked Aidan if he was ready to read just the first paragraph of a story with me. Aidan stared at me. I stared back trying to prepare a response to his typical "no." I was frustrated and started to think that he was never going to be ready and maybe there was nothing I could do to help him. Then he responded. "Yea, sure." Aidan picked up the short story and stared at it.

AIDAN: "Only the first paragraph?"

TEACHER: "Yes, just the first paragraph." He kept staring at the story, rubbing his hand on his jeans. "Aidan?"

AIDAN: "I can't do that thing."

TEACHER: "What thing, Aidan?"

AIDAN: "You know, when you are reading and you see things, like the TV thing you talk about?"

TEACHER: "Visualizing?"

AIDAN: "Yea, I just can't get that picture inside my head, Miss."

Mark: "I don't read books. My teachers do."

Mark enters the classroom bellowing, "Hello. I'm here in this stupid class," and slaps his black binder on his table. I am sitting on the stool placed in the back of the classroom listening to a student share her weekend. I sigh at his typical obnoxious

behavior. “Good morning, Mark.” He says nothing to me and instead runs over to another student who just entered the classroom. They laugh uncontrollably. I remind them to get ready for class. Mark does not listen and paces the classroom.

TEACHER: “Mark, can you please take your seat? We are going to start class now.”

MARK: “No, I don’t want to.”

I take a breath. I feel challenged and pressured to continue teaching for the other students, yet managing bad behaviors does not naturally lend to doing both tasks well.

TEACHER: “Students please find your fluency partners and begin reading.”

Papers are shuffled and student voices fill the classroom as they find their partners and reading places. Then finally, I hear the murmur of reading. Mark is standing by the bookshelf looking around the room.

TEACHER: “What’s going on today?”

MARK: “Nothing.”

His tone is aggressive. I try to get more out of him by asking if he is having a difficult day and sharing something from my own experiences. He tells me he does not care with such force that I almost believe him. I remind him of our classroom expectations and ask him if he thinks he can follow those expectations. He tells me, “Nope” and walks out of the classroom.

In the following weeks, Mark’s behavior became more challenging. On one occasion, I suggest that he and I work together on the reading assignment. He shouts, “No way!” and leaves the room. I did not know what to do with him.

During winter conferences, I ask Mark to tell me about reading class. We sit at the

beach. He is slouched back in a beach chair looking around the room until he offered his typical responses, “I want to go to PE” and “It’s boring stuff we do in reading.” I stare at him.

TEACHER: “Tell me what you mean.” He looks up at me and his tone becomes more irritable.

MARK: “We read too much in reading class. All we do is read.”

I pause and then break the classroom silence with a “Yes!” Mark just stared at me. Students start chuckling. Some questioned, “Ms. Malone, are you okay?” I slide back into the beach chair and let his words sink in.

He hated reading class because he had to *practice* reading. I went on to ask Mark what reading is like in his other classes. He told me, “I don’t read books in other classes. My teachers do.” Mark went on to explain that in his other classes, his teachers read the text out loud and he simply had to listen. He had few opportunities to practice reading.

Jessica: “I just started asking questions!”

My fourth period reading students had been practicing how to be active readers. For the purposes of this book, the term active reader is a reader who automatically engages with the text by making predictions, asking questions, visualizing, inferring, making connections and summarizing. Teaching my students how to be active readers instead of expert word callers (decodes words but does not comprehend) was challenging. My students were mostly concerned with finishing the assignment and not so much with understanding what they

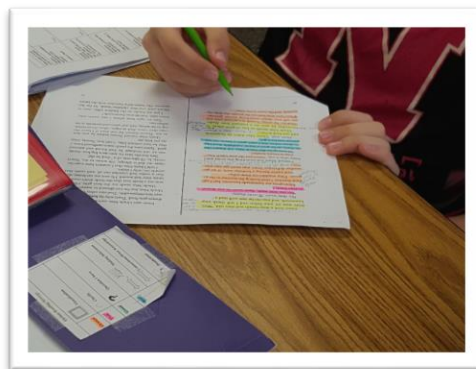


Figure 2: Student learning how to code text.

read. Jessica was one of those students. She read the text fluently, but when I asked her, “What did you think of the last part?” She struggled to respond. Most of my students became frustrated moving from word caller to active reader. Mostly, students scribbled “wow” throughout the text, which certainly was not the active reading I had in mind.

I first met Jessica during an open house at the beginning of the school year. While her mom and dad visited with me, she looked down at the floor or her gaze wandered around the classroom. Despite her shyness, she always greeted me at the classroom door with a big smile and a pleasant greeting. Sometimes she asked to eat lunch with me to redo reading assignments or to be surrounded by quietness.

After my first lesson in teaching my students how to be active readers and making their thinking visible, Jessica asked to talk with me about reading. As the class cleared out, Jessica stood by the whiteboard clutching her binder. When everyone had left she looked down at the floor, pulled her binder closer to her chest and told me that she did not know how to ask questions when she read. I had not given my students guiding prompts for each strategy.

The following day Jessica was the first student to arrive to class. “Hi, Ms. Malone. How’s your day?” Her cheery voice made me smile. I showed her the strategy cards that I had made the day before and thanked her for letting me know she was having a hard time asking questions. Each card listed an active reading strategy that we were working on. I also made bookmarkers available to Jessica and her classmates to help prompt their thinking. For the rest of the week, Jessica and her classmates worked on making their thinking visible using the strategy cards. Students were beginning to write questions and make longer predictions throughout the text.

One day, I called Jessica over to the beach to discuss her reading. As I was looking over her text, I saw paragraphs with several thoughts written in the margins demonstrating active reading, but then I noticed sections, sometimes one to two pages long, with little to no writing. I asked Jessica why she was demonstrating being an active reader in some text sections but not in others. Jessica picked up her paper and carefully looked it over. “I don’t know why I do that.” I explained to her that active readers constantly interact with the text; they have a movie playing in their minds. I had her explain what she thought was happening in her blank sections. Jessica explained that sometimes she just gets tired of reading and will start to think of other things. I worked with her that day on rereading each paragraph, stopping and prompting her to ask a question, to predict or to use one of the other seven key strategies we were working on. When we finished, Jessica looked up at me with a big smile, “Wow, Ms. Malone. I did not know I could do that!”

Working with Jessica taught me that if I wanted my students to be active readers, I had to teach them how to monitor their comprehension. When students came into the classroom the following week, I provided for them five different colored highlighters in zip lock bags - each color representing one of our strategies. I instructed that whenever they have a thought to highlight the text with the appropriate color and then write out their thought. I told them I wanted to see their text covered in colors. This workshop went well. Maybe it was the highlighting that hooked them or the fact that they felt more confident as readers because they could *see* how they were interacting with text.

After our active reader workshop had taken place, Jessica came running into my room shouting my name.

JESSICA: “Ms. Malone!” Ms. Malone!”

TEACHER: “Jessica! What is it?” I thought something terrible had happened.

JESSICA: “Last night, I was reading my personal reading book, and I did it!” She
was so excited her breath was short.

TEACHER: “You did what?”

JESSICA: “I just started asking questions! I was like oh my gosh, I am asking
questions like Ms. Malone taught us!”

We both started jumping up and down to celebrate. I told her to tuck this moment
inside her memory palace to remember how she felt with her success.

Commentary

The teaching excerpts of Aidan, Mark and Jessica began my exploration of
extending my chats at the beach. I realized without a more personal approach to learn
about my students reading, my struggling readers were not going to improve their
literacy. I started wondering how I could listen to and discover the stories of my
struggling readers and then use those stories to inform my teaching practice. In practice, I
was conferencing with my students. The idea of conferencing has been well developed in
writing education. Laura Robb (2010) in her book, *Teaching Middle School Writers*,
advocates for the use of conferencing with students. When teachers tailor instruction to a
student’s needs and understand the student as a learner and as a person, we find more
efficient ways to teach and support students. Other books, such as Nancy Atwell’s (1980)
In the Middle and Jeffery Wilhelm’s (2007) *You Gotta Be the Book*, also encourage
conferencing as a way to gain more insight into a student’s writing or reading experience.

Our classrooms are filled with students like Aidan, Mark and Jessica who are

disengaged and unmotivated and who struggle with learning. Aidan could not visualize when he read, so he used avoidance behavior to cover up his missing literacy skills. Struggling readers find it easier to avoid learning rather than risk potential ridicule from peers. Researches Frank Pajares and Laura Graham (1999) studied the impact avoidance has on learning. They explain that when a student uses avoidance behavior, as Aidan did, they become unmotivated and experience a decrease in their engagement, attitude and self-efficacy – an individual's belief in their ability to learn – towards learning. Conferencing with students about their literacy uncovers missing literacy skills that may be buried underneath student attitudes and behaviors.

Similarly, Mark was reluctant to participate in learning activities. His lack of a motivation led to an increase of disruptive classroom behavior. Allen Gottfried and his colleagues speak to the importance of motivation to middle school struggling readers. In their article, *Continuity of academic intrinsic motivation from childhood through late adolescence: A longitudinal study* (2001), they show that when students experience a decline in enjoyment, curiosity and persistence towards learning a drop in academic intrinsic motivation occurs. Conferencing and carefully listening to Mark helped me understand his lack of motivation. Mark encouraged me to think why students become reluctant to learn, especially in middle school. He made me examine what type of authentic reading opportunities students were exposed to in my class and throughout their school day.

Jessica helped me understand the importance of assisting my students to reflect on their cognition, so they could become metacognitive readers. Jessica was a fluent word caller but struggled understanding what she read, yet she had a positive self-efficacy.

Giving her necessary reading supports helped her become an active reader. Scholar

Albert Bandura has done extensive research on social learning theory. Particularly, in his article, *Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change* (1977), he discusses self-efficacy's impact on learning. Proficient readers and readers who have a positive self-efficacy are more likely to use metacognitive skills to understand what they are reading. These readers have likely experienced competence, encouragement and feedback in reading related learning goals. Bandura adds that even if the learning is difficult for these readers, they will troubleshoot and persist with a positive self-efficacy.

Additionally, students who have a positive self-efficacy feel a sense of agency in the classroom. They know their place and what they are learning. A lack of positive self-efficacy creates a weak sense of agency and does not allow students to feel in control of their learning.

THE POWER OF A NARRATIVE

We are the authors of our stories. The experiences we encounter and the revisions we make create our narrative. While most people are the protagonists in their stories, students who struggle with learning see themselves as a secondary character. These students enter our classroom doors reluctant, unmotivated and resistant to learning.

Knowing place and knowing oneself is critical to learning. Peter Johnston, in his book, *Choice Words* (2004), emphasizes when students do not see themselves as the protagonist to their story, it is usually because they do not feel a sense of agency in their environment. Johnston describes a sense of agency as an awareness that the environment responds to our actions. When students have developed a weak sense of agency, they experience feelings of helplessness and depression and become unmotivated and stubborn towards learning. Saba Vlach and Judy Burcie in *Narratives of the Struggling Reader* (2010) explain that when students feel that they belong in the classroom community, they have the power to change their present narratives, where they do not view themselves as the protagonists, into narratives where they do. Students develop the necessary confidence to see themselves as readers because they experience a feeling of likeness within the classroom community.

A sense of agency in the classroom space allows a student to reshape their narrative. When we take a step back from teaching to the test, to listen to students' voices and to discover their needs, we help our students grow a passion for learning. We help them rewrite their literacy stories, with themselves as protagonists. In essence, we change their literacy stories.

The Framework to Change Literacy Lives

“I Don’t Read No Books.” How Teachers Can Use Students’ Literacy Stories to Change Literacy Lives aims to provide more awareness to literacy by encouraging educators to listen to and to discover the stories of struggling readers by using student stories to inform instructional practice. Instead of teaching students a one-size fits all curriculum, I propose a conferencing system that allows teachers to (1) connect with students; (2) gather their past literacy history, including family and school experiences; and (3) use that information to design and tailor individualized reading instruction. This book explores what would be an effective reading curriculum if coupled with the right intervention strategies to engage students who need the most reading support. It cautions against drawing premature conclusions about disruptive student behavior. Lastly, it urges you to embrace your student’s stubbornness to fuel passion for reading.

Every school and classroom differ, so as you are reading, keep an open mind on how you can adjust the instructional approaches to fit the needs of your students. I invite you to think about a school district similar to Shelley Harwayne’s, in *Lifetime Guarantees* (2000) or a school district similar to mine. If you teach in a school district that has not done conferences and has a mandated curriculum that consists of mostly whole group and computer-based instruction, such as Read 180 or Systems 44, think about how you can adjust your instruction to implement what I propose while working within the constraints of your curriculum. If you are already teaching in a school district where conferencing is being used, then think about what components you can add to make conferencing with your students stronger.

Throughout the book, figures and sidebars provide a guide with additional

information. For instance, in Part Two, Teacher Talk sidebars provide suggestions on how you can implement the strategy into your classroom. All names and places are pseudonyms.

The second part of this book, I explain how educators can learn how to transform their teaching practices to focus on students' needs. The flowchart below outlines the process of discovering student stories.

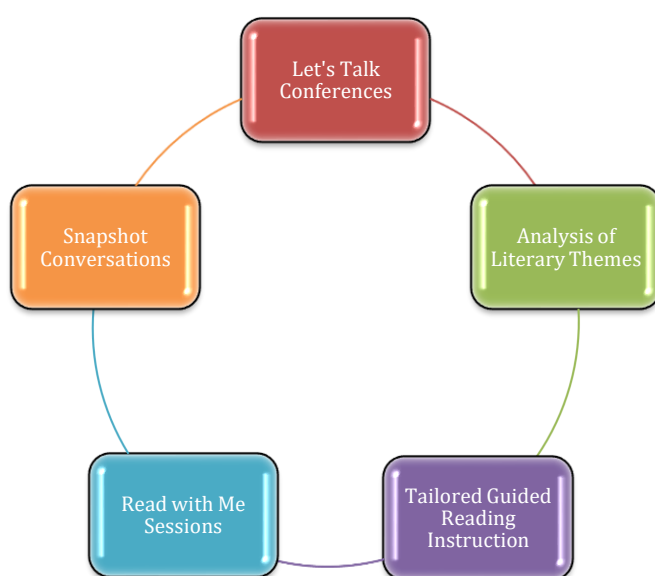


Figure 3: Components of Discovering Student Stories

This process includes four parts: (1) scheduling a Let's Talk Conference with individual students; (2) completing an analysis of literacy themes from the Let's Talk Conference; (3) adjusting instruction through tailored Guided Reading Instruction; and (4) following-up with students during Read with Me and Snapshot Conversations in order to evaluate changing literacy needs and achievements in literacy skills. Listening is a major component of discovering student stories. Saba Vlach and Judy Burcie in *Narratives of the Struggling Reader* (2010) advocate teachers must listen carefully in order to create learning opportunities where students can be successful. Listening

carefully provides teachers with information on how to help our students improve their literacy. Plus, listening to students as they share encourages students to be protagonists in their stories. Student feelings become validated and a sense of belonging emerges.

In Part Three, I showcase four student narratives from an urban, Nebraska school district. Cardinal Middle School accommodates around 725 students in grades sixth through eighth. The demographics of the school, at the time of writing this book, reveal 78.3 percent of the students are white, 8.8 percent Hispanic, 6.5 percent two or more races, 4.4 percent African American, 1.2 percent Asian, and .8 percent Native American. 47.9 percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch.

The students highlighted were in a remedial reading class for seventh graders, with a class size of ten students. Reading Intervention consists of students who read independently at only the first to second grade reading level. Students often struggle with emergent literacy skills, such as decoding and letter identification, reading fluency, and using active reading strategies - visualizing a picture while reading, predicting what will happen next, making connections, clarifying the unfamiliar, inferring, summarizing, and asking questions about the story. Students are recommended for a reading intervention class for seventh grade by their sixth grade Language Arts teacher. Indicators of a student needing a reading intervention course include low performance on classroom assessment, teacher observational notes, unit comprehension or vocabulary tests. Reading Intervention is a yearlong fifty-minute class period and takes the place of an elective course, such as PE, Art, Industrial Technology, or Family and Consumer Science. The four students, Gigi, Brandon, Parker and Cadence, although enrolled in the same reading intervention class, required different instructional approaches to meet their literacy needs.

In the conclusion, I summarize what I learned from uncovering the literacy stories of Gigi, Brandon, Parker and Cadence. I invite educators to shift their mindset and learn to pause, and I leave the reader with the importance of learning student stories. An appendix includes ready to use templates, use them freely, as well as a glossary of terms to help you build context. Finally, as you read this book, think about your students, think about yourself as an educator and think about how you can discover your students' stories. Then, give your *best* effort in changing a student's literacy story.

LEARNING TO DISCOVER STUDENT STORIES

LET'S TALK CONFERENCE

The final bell rings and I enter the classroom after waiting in the hallway.

TEACHER: "Good morning, students! How are we doing?"

JUSTIN: "I'm tired."

CADENCE: "Yea, I did not sleep last night; my baby brother kept me up."

ERIC: "Well, my mom woke me up too early."

PARKER: "I did not want to come to school today."

BRANDON: "Parker, you never want to come to school!"

CADENCE: "Miss, can we just have a free day, today?"

GIGI: "I'm having a good morning, Ms. Malone."

TEACHER: "My day is okay, too."

I take a seat on a metal stool placed in the front of the classroom. Gigi and Cadence are sitting attentively at their tables; they have their personal reading books and journals placed in front of them. Derek stands behind his chair swaying back and forth. Justin chooses the desk in the back corner of the classroom and lays motionless across it. His black hoodie is wrapped tightly around his head. Eric and Kyle are at the beach laughing. Michelle, Parker and Amy are sprawled on the floor, personal reading books lying beside them. Brandon is reading under the cutout hole of the cabinet.

This is my first period seventh grade Reading Intervention class. I do not assign students seats. Students sit where they feel they can learn best. I have found that giving students this choice helps them meet their learning needs, and they respond to my

teaching better.

The principal's voice comes over the intercom. "Good Morning, students!" He begins reading the daily announcements as several of my students groan.

"Why do we have to listen to *this*, Ms. Malone?" Brandon says. I remind them to keep their voices quiet so that others can hear the information. "...and remember to make good choices and show kindness to each other and your teachers. The choice is yours."

The principal's message ends with everyone standing for The Pledge of Allegiance.

TEACHER: "Okay, students. I need everyone's attention on the board."

BRANDON: "Those announcements were boring."

PARKER: "When is lunch time?" Students shuffle around.

TEACHER: "Focus, please. Today, we need to accomplish three things." I then repeat, "How many things?" The class responds in unison, "Three."

This teaching technique, referred to as call and response, I picked up from Anita Archer in her book *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching* (2010). Its purpose is to get students engaged with the lesson.

TEACHER: "First, we will personal read.² And during personal reading, we will be continuing with our Let's Talk Conference."

ERIC: "Ms. Malone, can I go first today?"

CADENCE: "No, it's my turn to go! Right, Miss?"

TEACHER: "Eric, it is Cadence's turn. You are scheduled to go after her, okay?"

Eric sighs loudly and plops back into his chair.

² Personal reading is a time set aside for students to independently read self-selected books at the beginning of class. The term personal reading is an educational practice that has become part of the classroom language despite its problematic grammar.

TEACHER: “After personal reading, we will move into Guided Reading, and lastly, for independent strategy practice, you will be completing your inferencing passage. Talk to me, what questions do you have?”

I pause and scan the room. A lot of blank stares. After no one raises any issues, I continue.

TEACHER: “Okay, remember during personal reading time, focus on being an active reader. What kind of reader?” Students respond in unison, “An active reader.”

TEACHER: “Please move to your personal reading spots. Cadence, let’s go to the beach.”

As the others shuffle around, Cadence and I do our second Let’s Talk Conference.

Growing an Idea

Disengaged. Low performer. Reluctant. Struggling. Disabled. Slow reader. These labels are attached to students who read below grade level or are unmotivated to perform school literacy tasks. Assigning labels to students, obviously and inherently, is problematic. Donna Alvermann, in her article titled *Reading Adolescents’ Reading Identities: Looking Back to See Ahead* (2001) agrees that a label can harm a person’s identity by creating underlying assumptions that may not be accurate but still negatively impact self-esteem and self-efficacy. For instance, students who have been labeled as reluctant may be placed in a remedial reading support class. Their placement may not be necessarily due to ability but because of low motivation towards school under the assumption that their reluctance is due, in part, to their struggles. Typically, they are

taught with some one-size fits all curriculum that rehearses and drills students on basic reading skills, saturated with the teaching of reading strategies and skills they have been exposed to since kindergarten. Furthermore, the reading material provided is outdated and disengaging. These methods do not necessarily meet individual student needs. Although bookshelves are full of well-written books for educators on how to teach reading strategies to students, student voice remains absent from most curriculum.

Unfortunately, despite the lack of voice in the reading curriculum, labels offer little insight about the reading habits of a student. What does it mean to be a “struggling” reader? Does the student have difficulties decoding words, reading automatically and fluently, or are they simply not interested in reading? A complete reader, as Steven Layne describes, is a student who has both the skill and the will to read. As a seasoned reading teacher, when I started listening to student stories, I realized that students did not necessarily need to be retaught a reading strategy but rather needed me to adjust my teaching techniques to better support their academic needs. These academic needs often are not skill-related but will-driven. Aiden, whom I described in Chapter One, taught me how to listen, while Justin helped me reshape my teaching techniques through Let’s Talk Conferences.

“I’m not filling out this stupid thing!” Justin said, tossing the yellow sheet of paper on the floor. It was the first day of school. My seventh-grade students were completing the typical first day of school Initial Reading Self-Assessment developed by reading researchers Michael McKenna and Steven Stahl from their book *Assessment for Reading Instruction* (2003). The Initial Reading Self-Assessment helps me understand

my students' reading background by asking students to reflect on themselves as readers, with questions such as, "How do you feel about reading?" Students can circle positive, neutral or negative. The assessment also asks students to list their favorite books or authors and how much time they read outside of school.

As other students in the class marked responses on their yellow sheet, Justin slouched over his table. I walked over and knelt down beside him.

TEACHER: "Hey, what's going on?" "How can I help you?"

JUSTIN: "Leave me alone. I am not doing that stupid thing."

TEACHER: "Come on, I'll help you."

JUSTIN: "No."

At that moment, I wanted to walk away from this student. Fine, do not do it then. He was struggling to complete a worksheet about his reading interests. Great start. Then I remembered Aiden, and I stopped and picked up his wrinkled paper.

TEACHER: "Hey, let's go to the beach and talk, just for a moment." Finally, he lifted his head.

JUSTIN: "I am not filling that out."

TEACHER: "That's fine. Let's just go talk at the beach." He moved slowly but eventually made his way into the Adirondack beach chair.

TEACHER: "So, talk to me. What's going on?" He stared at me with anger.

JUSTIN: "It's stupid. I hate it."

TEACHER: "You hate what?"

JUSTIN: "Reading."

TEACHER: "Hmm ... yeah, I hated reading when I was younger too. In high

school, my teacher assigned us three to four chapters every night to read.

We were given class time to complete the majority of the reading, but I did not do it. I sat there and fake read.” (His head turned towards me. I finally garnered his attention.) “I remember watching my best friend sitting next to me and when she turned her page, I counted thirty seconds in my head, then turned my page.”

I went on to tell him how in order for me to understand what I was reading in high school, I had to read out loud. Although I was given class time to read, I went home frustrated because I had thirty pages to read at night.

TEACHER: “Now, can I help you fill this out so that I can get to know you better as a reader and help you?” A long pause, then an “I guess.”

Identifying something that I had struggled with and using that as an empathy tool in order to gain a greater understanding of his struggle allowed a meaningful connection to form with Justin. I learned that he was a student who had been enrolled in reading support classes since elementary school, and because of the extra support, he missed out on classes such as PE, art, music, and computers. Reading was laborious for him, especially when the text had multisyllabic words. He did not read at home and avoided it as much as possible at school. Reading was just words. He had trouble connecting the words to ideas. What had started out as an intervention to motivate Justin to complete the assessment led to discovering his literacy story though Let’s Talk Conference.

Setting up Let’s Talk Conference

Stage One: Defining Let’s Talk Conference

Let’s Talk Conference allows the teacher to create a reader profile of their

students by discovering three things: (1) Reader's Past: What is the student's self-perception of their personal background and their literacy story?; (2) Reader's Current: What is the student's current reading knowledge and how do they react to teaching strategies that are meant to help them improve their literacy skills?; and (3) Reader's Future: What is the student's vision of the reader he or she wants to become? At the center of a Let's Talk Conference is the teacher adjusting his or her teaching moves to fit the needs of students and consistently reflecting on what is working and not working for the student.

A Let's Talk Conference is similar to a student-teacher conference, but different in key ways. In a student-teacher conference, the teacher shares with students their progress, their proficiencies and what needs improvement. I conduct student-teacher conferences at the end of each quarter with my students. During a student-teacher conference, I do most of the talking and the student does the most of the listening. By contrast, a Let's Talk Conference is student-led. During these conversations, the student becomes teacher and the teacher becomes learner, whose primary job is to *listen*.

A Let's Talk Conference is one of my first major interactions of the year with students. Each conversation lasts around ten minutes and occurs in my classroom in an area referred to as "the beach." I like to have the conversations at the beach because it is a welcoming space. I tell students a Let's Talk Conference is an important part of our reading class because they share what they need from me. What surprises me most is how excited students are to have the beach talk. While there are some hesitant students, mostly everyone loosens up after they observe other classmates talking with me.

Stage Two: Scheduling A Let's Talk Conference With Students

Students sign up for a time to complete a Let's Talk Conference with the teacher.

They have three options: class time, lunch or after school. The day before a student's scheduled Let's Talk Conference, I give him or her a reminder pass. A sample Let's Talk Conference sign-up sheet and reminder pass is included in Appendix E.

Stage Three: The Teacher's Role

Gathering their story: just listen. A Let's Talk Conference happens at the beach. I have a set of questions aimed at discovering the student's story. Some students talk freely while others answer questions nervously. I try to make the students comfortable so I can learn about them and their needs. After our initial greeting, before a Let's Talk Conference, I explain to students that I have some questions that I want to ask them to build their reading profile in order to discover their missing literacy skills, to improve my teaching praxis and to teach them better. Some of these questions include:

- *Describe yourself as a reader?*
- *What do you do when you don't understand what you are reading?*
- *How does reading make you feel?*
- *How often do you read? What type of reading do you do in the summer?*
- *How long have you been in a reading support class?*

A complete list of the questions is included in the appendix. My goal is to understand who they are, what kind of reader have they become, and what they need from me to support their literacy needs.

The initial Let's Talk Conference is a conversation primarily to discover the student's past, how they feel about reading, and how they see themselves as future readers. During this conversation, my primary purpose is to listen. At first, it was difficult

for me to listen without intervening with leading questions and to let our conversation unfold naturally. My solution was to silently count to thirty seconds to allow the student to think and share their thoughts. As a teacher, it is a natural tendency to take charge and do the talking. However, over the years, I have found when I act more as a facilitator and give students the opportunity to collaborate, such as through a comprehension strategy called Reciprocal Teaching developed by Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar and Ann L. Brown in 1984, and adjust their learning, they are highly successful.

Sometimes the student responses were short and did not give me much insight about them as a reader. For instance, when I asked Paris what kind of reader she was, she responded, “Good.” Using the phrase, “tell me some more” guided me to avoid asking leading questions and helped the student elaborate on their responses. After I asked Paris to tell me more, she added, “I am a good reader because I can read fast.” Her second response offered me more insight into her self-perspective as a reader and led me to adjust my teaching praxis to fit her individual learning needs.

Stage Four: Analysis of Literary Themes

After the initial Let’s Talk Conference, I dig into the conversation to uncover literacy needs. The analysis involves three steps: (1) coding and marking; (2) analyzing patterns and themes; and (3) creating a reader’s profile. Analyzing each student’s Let’s Talk conversation, can be time consuming, but I remind myself that this is my professional responsibility. If I taught English classes, I would be grading stacks of essays. For me, setting a one-week deadline to analyze my students Let’s Talk Conversation and a timer for ten minutes keeps me focused during the analysis. I encourage you to find what works best for you, so you can efficiently uncover your

students' literacy stories.

Coding and marking. As I read through my notes, I ask key questions to help me pick out themes and patterns that I noticed about the student:

- What is hard for the student? Do they need more support in a reading strategy or skill?
- Do they have misconceptions about reading?
- What has reading been like? What are their past reading experiences?
- What is their self-efficacy towards reading?
- What do they seem to need from me?

These key questions are centered on the reading components that define the reading process and are the foundation for comprehension:

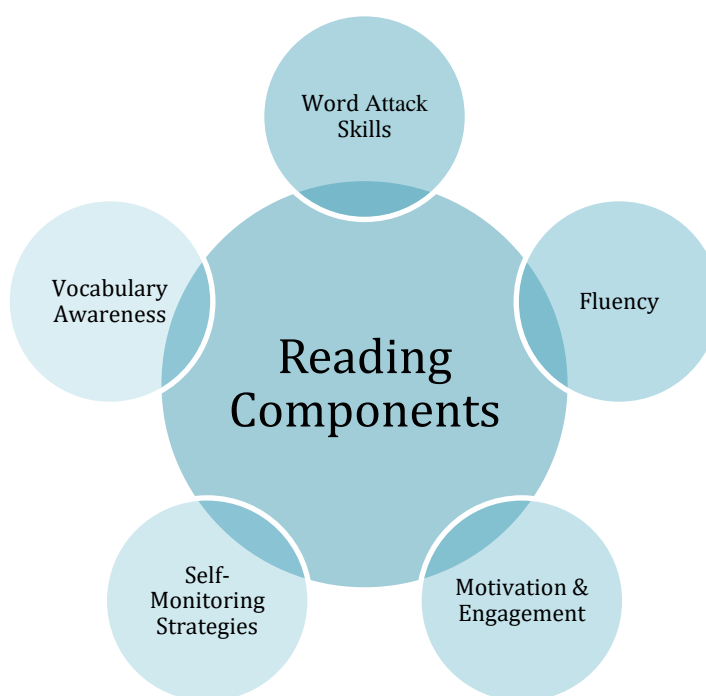
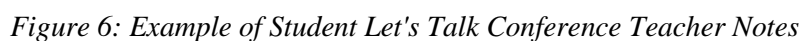


Figure 4: Reading Components

These components help me build themes and patterns from the key questions. From my experience, the themes and patterns fall into one of these five categories: reading misconceptions, self-identity, missing reading skill and strategies, reading experiences and reading attitude. As I read student comments, I jot down, using a different colored pen, codes for the themes and patterns that I am learning about the student. I also pay attention to comments that maybe were said to please the teacher. Please see Figure 6, for an example of analyzing the Let's

<u>Coding Marks for Let's Talk</u>	
?	Trying to please the teacher/ follow-up with student
+	Positive Experience/ attitude with literacy
—	Negative Experience or attitude with literacy
★	Interesting/Comment stands out
○	Key words

Figure 5: Coding Marks Chart



themes, and student comments on the Let's Talk Conference Literacy Analysis Chart,

Figure 7. This chart guides your thinking, as you move from what a student tells you

during the Let's Talk Conference to a teaching intervention or strategy. The left column lists the five major themes that I use to categorize student comments. I encourage you to add to the list as you uncover your students' literacy stories. The middle column includes a space to record student comments from the Let's Talk Conversation into the appropriate category. Finally, the last column explains the teaching intervention or strategy needed to support the student.

Let's Talk Conference Literary Analysis Chart

Common Theme/Pattern	Student Comment	Teaching Intervention/Strategy
Reading Misconceptions	<p>"I'm a good reader because I read."</p> <p>"I'm a good reader because I can read the words fast."</p> <p>"I am a good reader because I have good fluency and can read without stopping."</p> <p>"If you read a bunch, then you know what you are reading."</p> <p>"I can read because well, um, I just read."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the reading process with students. Teach what is reading and why reading is important. Teach the difference between an active and passive reader.
Reader's Self- Identity	<p>"I just do it because I don't want to make the teacher mad."</p> <p>"I have failed myself."</p> <p>"Reading makes me feel sometimes good and sometimes bad."</p> <p>"I don't want to be like my dad and not read."</p> <p>"Reading makes me feel smart."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on building a positive teacher-student relationship. Offer praise and give constant, specific feedback. Work with the student on becoming intrinsically motivated verses extrinsically motivated. Set literacy goals with the student.
Knowledge of Reading Strategies/Skills	<p>"I can't get deep inside the books."</p> <p>"I can never find the right book."</p> <p>"I can't get that picture inside my head."</p> <p>"When I don't understand something I just go to the next page."</p> <p>"I talk like a robot when I read."</p> <p>"I sometimes reread."</p> <p>"When reading is frustrating, I put the book away."</p> <p>"I don't have good comprehension."</p> <p>"The words make it hard."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach how to make connections when reading Model how to find books using Book match (see appendix for an example) Teach how to visualize Monitoring comprehension/using fix-up strategies Model what it means to be a fluent reader. Discuss the components of a fluent reader (pace, prosody, phrasing, accuracy) Teach how to recognize when comprehension is breaking down and why rereading is important and when you should do it. Get to the root – what makes it frustrating. Teach students how to recognize they are frustrated and identify what in the reading is frustrating them. i.e. The words make it hard. Teach them how to self-monitor
Reading Experiences/Reading Attitude	"I read some at home."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For students with positive experiences and a positive attitude begin intervention/strategy

	<p>"My mom reads every night."</p> <p>"Reading is interesting."</p> <p>"Reading makes me feel calm."</p> <p>"Reading is important for jobs."</p> <p>"I never see my parents read."</p> <p>"Reading makes me feel horrible."</p> <p>"I don't read books."</p> <p>"Reading is boring."</p> <p>"I don't like to read, so I mess around in school."</p> <p>"Reading takes too much time."</p> <p>"Reading is not interesting at all."</p>	<p>support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student who have negative experiences and a negative attitude towards reading require patience and more guidance. • Work in phases over the course of several weeks. (Phase 1- build trust. Have conversations with students not about reading; Phase 2 – Start small with instruction. One strategy at a time. You do not want to overwhelm; Phase 3 – implement strategy/intervention in full
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Figure 7: Let's Talk Literary Analysis Chart

Creating a reader's profile. The final step in the Let's Talk Literary Analysis includes creating a Reader's Profile. Please see Figure 8: Reader's Profile. This allows the teacher to look at the student's strengths and which interventions or strategies to implement. Think of this step as your instructional overview for what you will teach. For example, if I discovered a student could not visualize text, I reinforce how to visualize and use the strategy appropriately during Guided Reading or a follow-up Let's Talk Conference. The follow-up Let's Talk Conferences are low-key chats that occur either during personal reading time or at the start of class. I sit next to the student and share with them how I will support them in reading class. Additionally, subsequent Let's Talk Conferences are scheduled at the end of the quarter. During this time, I ask students additional questions regarding their reading progress and learn how they are responding to my teaching strategies based on what they need. I make additional adjustments in my teaching accordingly.

<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> (Student's Name) Reader's Profile	
Positive Literacy Experiences/Attitude	Teaching Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reads at home ▪ Rich literacy home environment ▪ Good attitude towards reading ▪ Enjoys read alouds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to promote positive literacy feeling by praising and offering specific, ongoing feedback.
Reading Misconceptions	Teaching Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good reader means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “not stopping at the big words” and • “I am able to read fluently.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teach Active vs. Passive Reader ▪ Review Fluency Components – Phrasing, Prosody, Pace, Accuracy
Reader's Self- Identity	Teaching Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive Self-Efficacy towards reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thinks a good reader ▪ Reading makes him feel happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to promote positive literacy experiences. ▪ Offer praise and specific, ongoing feedback.
Knowledge of Reading Strategy/Skill	Teaching Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visualization – “A picture automatically pops into my head.” ▪ Self-monitors – “I don't always understand the words.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to teach the 7 Active reading strategies (Predicting, connecting, clarifying, summarizing, visualizing, inferring, questioning)
Additional Comments:	

Figure 8: Reader's Profile

GETTING SMART WITH TEACHING INSTRUCTION

Discovering the stories of my struggling readers and listening to them through Let's Talk Conference was easy and enjoyable. Using that information to look for themes and understand what they needed from me was enlightening. I felt that I was actually going to help them make progress towards their literacy skills, while fostering an enjoyment for reading. However, I would not be honest if I said the process of listening to students and discovering their stories occurred seamlessly. I encountered three roadblocks that made me question and doubt if hearing the student voice was the answer to improving their literacy skills. First, I had to learn to trust myself more as a teacher. I was going against what I had been told was an appropriate curriculum for middle school readers and implementing what I thought would be a more effective approach to teaching and improving my struggling readers literacy skills. It was difficult to let go and allow the conversations and student learning occur naturally because I wanted my teaching praxis to be effective.

Additionally, it was challenging to orchestrate the different teaching approaches for each student into practice. As a seasoned reading teacher, I realized adolescent struggling readers need effective reading instruction practices. I have learned curriculum often stifles teacher flexibility. Instead of integrating innovative, researched-based strategies, teachers lean heavily on a curriculum that may not meet the literacy needs of students. For instance, I have been a member of two reading curriculum revision committees. In 2010, I helped revise the high school reading intervention curriculum and, in the summer of 2016, I worked with my school district's curriculum specialist and another classroom reading teacher to revise the middle school reading intervention

curriculum. Both opportunities have taught me that creating a set curriculum for a school district is difficult. Students across the district have diverse needs and often the curriculum cannot provide all students with necessary, effective reading instruction. One solution may be to implement a reading curriculum that focuses on a set of best educational practices, so teachers can differentiate which type of the instruction matches individual literacy needs. When best educational practices replace or become the curriculum, the teacher is not constrained to work in an instructional framework. Students learn in different ways. Supporting student learning through different methods of instruction enhances their learning experience by creating more opportunities for student success. When students see success, they are encouraged to take ownership of their learning. As a seasoned reading teacher, I was challenged to come up with creative ways to implement what I had learned from each of my students.

The last roadblock encouraged me to think about what type of instruction would be most effective for each of my students. This was difficult because I found myself wanting to teach every strategy and skill to improve their literacy skills, while simultaneously following the set curriculum guidelines established by the district. I wanted my students to know how to use active reading strategies, understand the purpose and importance of reading, while understanding how to transfer what they were learning in reading class to cross-curricular classes. My mind was full of ways to adjust my teaching praxis, and I eagerly wanted to teach them. Usually, it was not the teaching of a literacy skill or strategy that I needed to begin with, but rather forming a relationship and creating student-teacher trust in order to build their self-efficacy and confidence as readers. If I were going to make any gains with my students, I needed to get smart with

how I could blend my approach of listening to students and adjusting my teaching moves based on their needs and still teach the district curriculum. Additionally, I worried about adjusting my instruction to fit the needs of each of my ten students.

Trying to blend what students needed with the district curriculum took patience, venting sessions with colleagues and self-care. Motivating a student to become engaged in a learning task that they have already given up on is not easy. When I asked them to work with me on their reading, they were unresponsive. My students were not meeting me halfway. I had the choice to either ignore the students slumped over every day, or I could adjust my teaching instruction to encourage them.

Adjusted Teaching Move #1: Just Say No to Whole Group Instruction

One of the first routines in the curriculum that I tossed out was whole group instruction. I began to dread Mondays for reasons other than it was the start of the workweek. Even before the class started, I knew our whole group session would result in blank stares and the possible chair being tossed, all because a student did not want to practice the strategy of the week.

I started to realize that my students did not need me giving them a whole group lesson every Monday on a specific reading strategy that they had been exposed to since grade school. They had likely already learned the process, for example, of how to state a prediction using support from the text by the time they reached the secondary grades. Researchers Frank Pajares and Laura Graham show in their study titled *Self-Efficacy, Motivation Constructs, and Mathematics* (1999) that middle school students tend to experience a drop in academic values, engagement and grades when transitioning from elementary to middle school. Norman Unrau and Jonah Schlackman add that the decline

in overall school performance for middle school students occurs particularly in the area of reading. In their two-year long study titled *Motivation and Its Relationship With Reading Achievement in an Urban Middle School* (2006), they show that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly impacts reading achievement for a middle school student. An increase in curriculum rigor coupled with a deficiency in reading strategies causes low self-efficacy and a lack of motivation for students to perform. Therefore, as a teacher, discovering the student's literacy story is essential to unwrapping why they do not make those predictions after years of exposure. When I discontinued whole group lessons, I felt that I was actually teaching my students what they needed, rather than completing a routine instructional requirement.

Guided Reading as Instructional Focus

My students needed me to work with them individually or as a small group and hone in on what they needed, not reiterate a strategy that most already had learned. Similarly, Kelly Gallagher in his book, *In the Best Interest of Students* (2015), advocates for more student directed activities and less teacher directed whole class activities in his 80/20 split teaching approach. I used the time that would have otherwise been used for whole group to implement another Guided Reading day in my classroom. At first, I used the district template for my Guided Reading lesson plans, which included reviewing the learning objective, a reading strategy preselected by the teacher, and two to three preselected vocabulary words. This created a lot of frustration. Rather than tailoring my instruction to fit my student's needs, I found my instruction was still similar to a whole group session but in a smaller setting. I was still teaching one specific reading comprehension strategy and pre-teaching three to four vocabulary words rather than

tailoring my instruction to fit what my students individually needed. For an elementary Guided Reading setting, the template is a good fit. However, for students in the middle grades, who have been enrolled in remedial reading classes since grade school, they needed more specific instruction.

Setting a guided reading schedule.

The solution I came up with was to differentiate my Guided Reading lesson plans to focus on what my students individually needed and to teach them how to read more organically. My class size of ten students made it manageable to group students into two groups of five students based on students' independent reading levels and their

Teacher Talk #2

Pause. I understand differentiating Guided Reading lessons into two groups with a class size of thirty students is not realistic.

As you read this section, think about which elements you could implement with your larger class size.

literacy needs, as discovered from their Let's Talk Conference with me. For instance, one group consisted of students who needed support in reading strategies, such as monitoring comprehension and using fix-up strategies to clear up text confusion. Another group consisted of students who viewed the text as a separate entity, reading words but not forming personal connections with what they were reading. This form of instruction helped me feel more organized while truly meeting individual needs. Please see Figure 9: Guided Reading Group Schedule as an example of designing student groups.

Group 1 (Reading Strategy Support)	Group 2 (Reading is Just Words)
Kaylee (visualizing)	Ryan (reading with a purpose)
Heather (using context clues)	Eric (self-efficacy)
Brandon (monitoring comprehension + fix up strategies)	Amy (reading importance)
Cadence (making inferences)	Cory (what is a reader?)
Gigi (asking thick questions)	Justin (connections)

Figure 9: Guided Reading Group Schedule

Guided reading materials. I worked with a colleague to create a student-guided reading booklet, where students could record their thoughts as they read. The booklet has three sections: before, during, and after reading. The first section, Before Reading, asks students to activate their thinking about the text passage by stating a prediction, asking a question, or making a connection. The second section, During Reading, offers a space for students to record their thinking as they read relating to the six key reading strategies - visualizations, predictions, connections, questions, clarifications, inferences. The Guided Reading booklet provided a window into my students thinking that did not require me to be present at the moment of metacognition. Please see Figure 10 for an example of the student guided reading booklet.

Additionally, I created a Guided Reading lesson plan template organized into three sections, across a three-day period (it typically took three days to complete one of our text passages) to support my teaching instruction for each student. Please see Figure 11 for an example of the Guided Reading Lesson Plan.

Before Reading:

Set Purpose (make prediction):
Question:
Connection:

During Reading:

Visualizations:	Predictions: Confirm/Reject: Why?
Connections:	Questions:
Clarifying:	Inferences:

After Reading:

Summary:
Reactions/Thoughts:

Figure 10: Guided Reading Student Booklet

Figure 11: Guiding Reading Lesson Template

Guided Reading Lesson Plan	
Period: 1 st Before Reading (5 minutes) DAY: January 2 nd , 2018	
Group: 1 TEXT PASSAGE: Disaster Strikes - Earthquake Shock (Scholastic Short Reads®)	
Learning Objective/ Essential Question	Essential Question: What would you do if you were in an earthquake?
Teaching Target (what information do students need?)	Text Genre: Realistic Fiction (Story events could happen in real life) Background of Story: An excerpt from Chapter 2 of Disaster Strike. Two friends, Joey and Fiona, find themselves stuck in an earthquake Text Features/Structure Visuals - Point out to students the character facial expressions and how they can help us understand what is happening in the text. Problem and Solution
Student Reminders (what do I want students to remember when reading?)	Focus on your targeted strategy as you read.
*During Reading [Students Read, Teacher works with individual students]	
After Reading Students Share reactions/questions	
Teacher Notes	
During Reading [Students Read, Teacher works with individual students on focused strategy/intervention]	
Student Name: Gigi	
Strategy/Intervention Focus	Inferences
Teacher Notes	
Student's Notes	
Goal Focus:	

The first section, Before Reading, introduces students to the text passage. It involves asking students an essential question, reviewing the text passage genre, background, and text features and text structure. The second section, During Reading, allows the teacher to tailor the reading instruction to fit each student's needs. I used this section to list what reading strategy each student was working on. The last section, After Reading, allows the teacher to conclude the reading of a text passage. It includes summarizing the text passage and having students share their reactions about the text passage. Please see Appendix G for the Guided Reading lesson plan template and Appendix H for the Guided Reading Student Booklet template.

Guided reading routine. Both Guided Reading groups participate in Guided Reading for fifteen to twenty minutes, with the majority of the Guided Reading time spent with students reading text. The Guided Reading routine has three instructional parts – Before Reading, During Reading, and After Reading.

Before reading. Time allotted for the Before Reading section was about five to seven minutes. First, on day one, I asked students an essential question to get them hooked into reading the text passage. Students had about one minute to think and record responses on their white boards. Afterwards, I discussed any information about the text passage students needed to

Teacher Talk #3

Students who struggle with reading need high interest text at their independent reading levels. In my experience, reading a novel with students who struggle is not effective in improving their reading skills, as they lack the reading stamina required to complete a novel and or their frequent absences interfere with progressing through the story.

Text Passage refers to Scholastic Short Reads®. These are high interest fiction and nonfiction reading passages directed at student's independent reading level.

know to support their reading, such as text background, genre and text features.

Following, students had about five minutes to think, record in their Guided Reading booklets and share either a before reading connection, question or prediction. Providing students time to pause and engage with the text helped activate their thinking. On the subsequent two and three days, the Before Reading time was set aside to review the text passage and recap thoughts students wanted to share.

A day one conversation went something like this:

TEACHER: “Okay, students you are hanging out with your friends at the mall and suddenly the ground jolts you. It’s an earthquake. What do you do? You have about one minute. Remember do not worry about spelling or grammar just get your thoughts written.”

As students write, I look over their responses and guide their thinking, if necessary.

TEACHER: “Okay, you have about thirty seconds start wrapping up your response and be ready to share.”

At ten seconds, I begin counting down so students know time is almost up and they need to stop writing.

TEACHER: “10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1. Markers down. Okay let’s share. Amy, can you start?”

All students share their thoughts. A few students comment on each other’s responses.

TEACHER: “Those were great responses. I think if I was in caught in an earthquake, I would try to find a location away from buildings. Okay,

students let's look at the new passage that we are going to start today."

I hand each student the text passage.

TEACHER: "Our text passage is an excerpt from chapter two in the book Disaster Strikes. It is a realistic fiction, so that means it is not true but the events could happen. The story is about some friends who get caught in an earthquake and what happens to them. As you read, I want you to think about what the problem is and how do the characters try to solve the problem. Also, do not forget to use the pictures as a guide if you are struggling to visualize. Now, let's pause here and activate your thinking before reading. Take two minutes."

Students turn to the text passage and record in their Guided Reading booklet either a prediction, question or a connection. I move around the table assisting students who need it and offering feedback on their written responses.

TEACHER: "Gigi, this is a good prediction. Can you expand your thinking and tell why you think that might happen? Alright, students you have thirty seconds, please start concluding your thoughts. And 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1. Marker's down. Let's share. Gigi, can we start with you?"

All students share their thoughts.

During reading. Day one through three, students independently read and recorded their thoughts. Before beginning independent, silent, or whisper reading, I reminded students to think about their literacy focus strategy while reading. They knew what they were focusing on through prior conversations with me during personal reading time and during our Let's Talk Conference. While students read the text, I moved around and

randomly sat next to each student and coached them on particular strategies pertinent to their reading needs. Sitting next to a student showed my interest in meeting them where they were at and indicated my willingness to stay awhile and engage in a level of commitment that prevented them from trying to just push me to the next student. I used part of the time reading aloud a short paragraph to model fluent reading, as well as the active reading process, through think alouds. Modeling to students not only reinforced what we were working on, but also energized students to read the text passage independently. Usually, I spent about three to five minutes with each student, depending on his or her instructional need. Most days, I was able to visit with every student. One of our conversations went something like this:

Conversation	Teaching Notes
TEACHER: "Amy, I know you are working on visualization. Is that correct?"	<i>Teacher reviews what strategy Amy has been focusing on.</i>
AMY: "Yes."	
TEACHER: "Can you tell me what visualization is?"	<i>Checking for understanding of strategy.</i>
AMY: "When I can picture the story."	
TEACHER: "Yes! And when we use our senses to help us picture what is happening in the story we are visualizing. Now, I want you to read this paragraph and turn your mind into a movie screen while you read. Can you do that?"	<i>Providing specific feedback to Amy.</i>
AMY: "Sure." (She begins to whisper read.)	
TEACHER: "Great! I heard prosody in your voice while you read that. Now, what strategy were you using?"	<i>Teacher gives specific feedback.</i>

AMY: “Visualize.”

TEACHER: “That’s right. What you were visualizing when you read?”

AMY: “Him sitting on a tree bleeding really bad dozing off and writing in his journal.”

TEACHER: “Yea, when you read that text line, ‘leaning against the tree,’ I could see a young boy with ruffled brown hair slouched by the tree. Now, I want you to continue reading this passage and record what you are picturing when you read.”

(Amy nods)

Checks for application of the strategy.

Teacher shares visualization to model and explains next steps for Amy.

In this conversation, Amy and I work on the comprehension reading strategy visualizing.

As the conversation unfolds, we define what it means to visualize and practice using the targeted reading strategy. The conversation ends with me giving Amy specific feedback about using the strategy, as well as encouragement to apply visualizing when reading.

In other conversations during this Guided Reading time did not focus on a specific reading strategy but were aimed at motivating students to read the text passage and put effort into learning. These conversations became confidence builders. I had to be careful with my word choice and my tone, as students who are behaviorally challenging and struggle with reading could shut down quickly. These conversations took patience because part of me wanted them simply to do the work but the other part of me understood that it was difficult to do the work. As you are reading this conversation, observe the supports in place. A conversation with a challenging student went something like this:

Conversation

TEACHER: "Eric, I appreciate that you have all of your materials ready. How is your day going?"

ERIC: "Good"

TEACHER: "Mine, too. It helps because it is Friday!"

TEACHER: "Can you read just the first three lines on this passage?"

(silence)

TEACHER: "When you are reading these three lines, I want you to think about what you are wondering about, like a question you have okay?"

(Eric begins to read text)

TEACHER: "I liked how you read those lines at a pace appropriate for you. Now, as you read those three lines, what did Ms. Malone want you to be doing?"

ERIC: "Think of a question"

TEACHER: "Yup, that's right. Now, can you share with me one to two things you were wondering about?"

ERIC: "Did the Bearwalker hurt him?"

TEACHER: "That's a good question. What do you think? Do you think the Bearwalker did hurt him?"

TEACHER: "Maybe."

TEACHER: "Why do you think, maybe?"

ERIC: "I don't know, because he was the

Teaching Notes

Teacher recognizes Eric's focused behavior.

Connecting with Eric to form positive teacher-student relationship.

Teacher asks Eric to read only a small portion of the text to not overwhelm him.

Eric remains silent, and I accept that as approval and move forward with the lesson.

Coaching Eric on how to strategically read text by using one specific strategy. Teacher defines strategy.

Teacher gives Eric feedback on reading. Prompts Eric on strategy.

Teacher asks Eric to share question, again, defining strategy in conversation. (Sometimes, I would share afterwards or before if I noticed the student struggling to respond.)

Teacher prompts Eric to answer question that leads to using the comprehension reading strategy predicting.

only one around.”

TEACHER: “That’s a good prediction. You will have to see if it comes true as you keep reading. You did a nice job. How did that make you feel?”

(Eric shrugs his shoulder and nods head in up and down motion.)

TEACHER: “Now, I want you to continue reading the rest of this paragraph on your own. When you are finished, I write down one more question - something you are wondering about in your Guided Reading book. Do you have any questions?”

ERIC: “No.”

Teacher pushes Eric to elaborate on thinking.

Teacher states comprehension strategy used. Builds reading confidence for Eric.

And explains next steps for Eric.

In this conversation, the scaffolding method developed by Jerome Bruner helps Eric use the reading strategy questioning. Scaffolding, as Bruner defines in his article titled *The Role of Dialogue in Language Acquisition* (1978), is a process involving structured guidance from the teacher, so novice learners can reach their learning potential. The scaffolding process involves three stages. During stage one, the learner receives helpful and guided support from the teacher. Stage two, involves the learner using self-talk to independently accomplish the learning goal. The last stage, stage three, is when the learner can automatically complete the learning goal, without teacher support, or the use of self-talk. In this example conversation, Eric is at stage one. He read small text portions to avoid frustration and throughout the conversation received prompts, specific feedback and praise to guide his practice of active reading. From a reading perspective, although Eric read and responded very little, with helpful support, he discovered that he can be an engaged and active reader.

Usually, without me being physically beside Eric, he put his head down on his desk. When this happened, I went over to Eric and encouraged him to try to get more work done, by saying something like, “I noticed you are not reading. What do you need from me?” Even when I knew I would not get a response, I still made an effort to check in and encourage Eric to work. I wanted him to know that I cared about his learning and wanted to see him improve. Sometimes Eric would react to my encouragement, but mostly he would remain slumped over his desk.

Teacher Talk #4

Accept that there will be some students whom we won’t be able to reach immediately.

What matters is that *we* don’t give up on them. It will feel exhausting and frustrating but we must continue to encourage, to motivate them and listen. One day they may just lift their head off their desk.

After reading. The After Reading

time took about three to five minutes, depending on the length of student responses. On day one and two, students shared general thoughts or questions about the story. Day three, after the students finished reading, a student-led text summary was shared and compared to what others in the group had written. Following, students shared their reactions and thoughts about the passage. Contributing to the whole group helped students become more confident readers because they felt success when sharing and listening to each other. Their thoughts were structured around Kayleen Bears and Robert Probst, *Disruptive Thinking* (2017) framework for reading text:

- In the book: what does the author want me to know?
- In my head: what am I thinking about while I read?
- In my heart: what am I feeling?

Students usually shared a general thought about the text. For instance, “I liked the story;” “I like reading about robots;” or “It was fun.” I often encouraged them to expand their thoughts and reflect on what they learned from the text. A day three conversation went something like this:

TEACHER: “Let’s start with summarizing our text passage. Who would like to lead?”

BRANDON: “Me!”

TEACHER: “Brandon, I appreciate your enthusiasm.”

Brandon reads his summary to the group. Afterwards, Amy asks to read her summary too. Together as a group we reframe an accurate summary of the text passage.

TEACHER: “Students, we have two minutes left. I want everyone to share one reaction they had about the passage. Dylan, can you start?”

DYLAN: “I thought the story was good.”

TEACHER: “Can you tell us why you thought the story was good?”

DYLAN: “I could connect with the character, like when he knew what to do and usually I do not panic.”

TEACHER: “Great! I am the opposite. I would panic and be more like Fiona.”

We continue until everyone has shared.

Adjusted Teaching Move #2: Increase Opportunities to Read and Collaborate

When I present, many teachers ask me what other students in the classroom do while the other half are in Guided Reading with me. The year that I was writing this book, the district required students to read and interact with an online text passage. While some of my students were motivated by this learning activity, other students were

disengaged and sat with their heads down. The curriculum was not motivating them to improve their literacy because many of the same reluctant students found it “boring” to sit, read and type a response. This type of learning experience may be similar in other situations where students are forced to read a text and answer a set of questions about that text passage; it did not match their needs.

I decided to ask my students what motivated them to want to read. The best way to find out what students need is to ask them. A teacher can learn a lot by asking questions and it forces the student to be more active by shifting the responsibility from teacher to student. I created the question, “What can Ms. Malone do to help motivate you to read?” on Google classroom and sent it to my students. Here were some of their responses:

- “can u start a book group and u pick the books because i don't pick good books because every book that i pick is boring”
- “I just need to read poetry because it helps me engage with the book”
- “You can introduce us to books we haven't read”
- “help me when I need help and I need help with words”
- “To make me a better reader you can help me read more and help me try to find books that best fit me.”
- “i thinnk i need harder stuff to read and someone to help me understand some things like how to ask question while i am reding”

Several of the students wanted me to help them find books to read, others wanted help with a particular reading strategy, such as questioning. However, Eric who wanted to start a book group, stood out most to me. Daily, he came to class and sat with his head down and completed little work. I loved this student’s idea of a book club and being able to

collaborate with peers.

Struggling readers are not often exposed to productive reading opportunities that encourage social interaction. Richard Allington, an established researcher in the field of reading instruction, stresses the need for improving reading instruction for struggling readers. In his book, *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research Based Programs* (2005), Allington shares the importance of looking at what makes reading instruction effective verses eliminating the “stuff.” Often, struggling readers are taught by teachers who are not experts in reading; they read texts that are too difficult for them; and they spend less time actually reading and more time doing isolated skills practice worksheets. He adds even though allocated instructional minutes for reading during the school day have increased, opportunities for struggling readers to read have not. The more productive and stimulating reading opportunities students have will increase student engagement, which ultimately will increase student achievement. Eric’s book club idea led me to contact the district curriculum specialist to gain approval to abandon reading text online during the Independent Strategy Practice and instead use that time for more collaborative opportunities. After meeting with the district curriculum specialist, I was approved to move forward with my book club idea. You may be thinking how did I make this happen? In the introduction section, I discussed how I have been fortunate to work with administrators who have allowed me to implement in my classroom praxis what I believe is an effective approach in teaching struggling readers. This was a similar situation where the curriculum specialist was open to explore different teaching approaches. It also helped that the district was in the middle of piloting a new reading curriculum and therefore open to trying new ideas. I am reminded of Kobi

Yamada's children's picture book, *What Do You Do With An Idea?* Yamada tells the story of a little boy who has an idea. It takes the boy awhile to share his idea because he is worried and scared of what others will think. Will they like his idea? Will they laugh? Yamada ends the book with a message to readers – you change the world with your ideas. If you are not as fortunate to work in a school district that is open to side stepping from the mandated curriculum to explore different teaching ideas, then I want you to remember your students. Your idea may be the one teaching approach that changes a student's literacy life.

Upon approval to eliminate the online reading, I organized a book club with another teacher from a sister school in our school district. The sister schoolteacher and I were excited about the possibility of adding a book club to our current curriculum. We knew it had potential to motivate some of our most reluctant students by providing student choice in book selection, improving interaction and collaboration through the integration of technology, as well as sharing ideas with peers. However, we were unable to start the book club. The logistics of scheduling times to meet and design our book club, such as grouping our students, setting up an online blog site, and providing books that were school appropriate, was difficult. This was disappointing as my students and I were really excited about this opportunity. Perhaps more time to plan and a different partnership with a school would have helped.

However, I did not give up on the idea of using the Independent Strategy Practice for more student collaboration. Instead of a book club with another school, I presented the idea of having students read an article or a book together. At first, I preselected the articles for collaborative reading, usually from Newsela- an online website that houses

current event articles for students. Independent reading levels can be adjusted on the articles differentiating the reading level for each student. Additionally, online interactive tools allow students to highlight and annotate the article while reading, and an optional quiz following each article checks for comprehension. Eventually, I discontinued pre-selecting the articles on Newsela and gave students choice on what they could read. I selected to use the Scholastic Action Magazine®, a printed magazine for struggling readers in grades sixth through twelve, who read between the third to fifth grade independent reading levels. The Scholastic Action Magazine® offers a variety of reading material to students, such as a reader's theater play, real life teen stories, and current in-the-news articles.

Teaching students how to become independent readers and interact with a text while collaborating with each other was complicated. I envisioned my students diligently reading and annotating texts, while sharing and discussing their thoughts with one another. I wanted them to independently do Reciprocal Teaching - an intervention developed by Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar and Ann L. Brown in 1984 - to teach students how to use multiple strategies while reading.³ That was just that - a vision.

Sometimes, I found myself wanting to quit and return back to the district Independent Strategy Practice routine of reading an online text article and answering text questions, even if some of them did just sit there. I typically observed this happening:

³ The reciprocal teaching model consists of four strategies: (a) summarizing what has been read, (b) predicting what will occur next in the text, (c) clarifying text parts that are confusing, and (d) forming questions about the context. After the teacher has instructed and modeled how to use the four strategies, students form groups and begin to practice using the strategies. Once students have read a small portion of text the student leader in the group will begin posing questions, summarizing, clarifying or predicting, while allowing other students to comment about the text (Pressley, 2007; Dole & et al 2009).

I glance up from my Guided Reading group. The other group of five students was huddled around Brandon's table in the front of the room. Gigi and Cadence were bent over the text. I could see them lifting their pencils occasionally to jot a note. Brandon and Justin were laughing, but when they saw me glance up at

them, they quickly put their heads down towards their desk. Eric was staring at the wall. I stopped class because I became so frustrated with my students not following expectations.

When I started to reflect on boundaries I was setting for students, I realized my expectations were unclear for them. The process itself was not failing; rather I was not giving them the right supports to be successful.

A coach clearly states to his players what he wants them to accomplish. I wanted my students to have this opportunity to read and collaborate with one another, but I failed to pave the way for them to be successful with it. As a seasoned reading teacher, I felt embarrassed that I did not set clear expectations sooner and assumed my students, who were eager to collaborate with one another and would do so miraculously and independently.

Teacher Talk #5

Struggling readers need to have clear expectations. When students do not know the learning goal, they become disengaged and left behind. Share with students what reading is, the process of reading, and why reading is important.

Solutions

One strategy I began to implement was CHAMPS - an instructional classroom management strategy developed by Randy Sprick. His book *Champs: A Proactive and*

Positive Approach to Classroom Management (1998), Sprick discusses that CHAMPS clearly communicates lesson expectations with students and outlines the five steps within CHAMPS: (1) conversation level (2) how to ask for help (3) the learning goal (4) movement (5) type of participation in order to reach success. The figure below is an example of how CHAMPS is displayed for students.

Conversation	Level 0 (independent) Level 1-2 (group discussion)
Help	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Try to figure it out yourself 2. Ask the leader 3. Ask another classmate at independent strategy
Activity	Reading
Movement	No movement (independent) Sit in small circle (group discussion)
Participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the text (annotate as you read) 2. Journal after reading using Book, Head, Heart 3. Discuss what you read with your group
Success!	Effort and quality work!

Figure 12: Champs

The first day I tried CHAMPS in my classroom for Independent Strategy Practice, I was amazed by how well students remained focused. They sat and read, some wrote, and even a few shared thoughts instead of moving around the room to grab a Kleenex or sharpen a pencil. They still needed support and my reminders to stay focused, but this was a good start.

In addition to the CHAMPS strategy, I also implemented three role assignments for students during independent strategy practice: a leader, a participant, and a time monitor. These role cards were posted on the whiteboard for students to write their names

underneath and know who had what job. Students assigned the roles. This strategy of assigning roles was inspired by the comprehension reading strategy reciprocal teaching. In reciprocal teaching students are assigned roles - the predictor, questioner, summarizer, and clarifier - to lead their group. The role cards also helped students stay more focused towards their learning. Several students took an interest in being the group leader and coaching their peers. This change in on-task behaviors did not happen all of sudden nor did my students reach perfection. It took weeks to massage the kinks out. Several times I had to stop my guided reading group and practice with students on how to respond appropriately to one another or what collaborating with one another should look and sound like. These conversations went something like this:

Conversation	Teaching Notes
TEACHER: Walking over to the Independent Strategy Practice group. "Tell me how your group is doing?"	<i>Greeting students. Getting their thoughts before stating my observations. Tone is calm but assertive. This is a brief two to three-minute conversation.</i>
AMY: "Okay."	
TEACHER: "Why okay and not great?"	
AMY: "They aren't participating." (student points to a few students).	<i>Encouraging students to explain why.</i>
TEACHER: "Boys, why are you not working with the group here?"	
(Amy shrugs)	
TEACHER: "Okay. Let's practice this. Who is the group leader? (Brandon raises his hand). What is your voice level during collaboration?"	<i>Practicing and going over expectations of collaborating and group work time. Checking for understanding.</i>
BRANDON: "Level two."	

TEACHER: “Right. If you need help what do you do?”

(Several students respond, “Ask each other.”)

TEACHER: “When Cadence asks everyone in the group to share questions, you share your questions. Everyone’s eyes should be on the speaker. Before you continue around the group make sure your question is answered. You should be having a brief discussion about each other’s question. If you are not speaking, your voice should be off so you can listen to what your peer is saying.”

TEACHER: “And remember to encourage each other; if someone shares a prediction and doesn’t offer support have them explain their reasoning for that prediction. Be polite to each other, and say things like, ‘Hey, Gigi, that was a good question. Ms. Malone should not be hearing you yell at each other.’ Do you have any questions?”

(Several students say, “No.”)

TEACHER: “Okay, get back to work. I know you can do better. I need you to do better.”

Giving encouragement helps build student confidence.

The practicing of routines is taxing to teaching but important to establish structure and routines. I had to coach students on how I wanted them to perform. There were many moments when my students left the classroom that I felt defeated and questioned if I should continue the group work or not. However, the little moments of success – watching Amy lead her small group into writing, a summary of the reading passage they read; listening to Gigi tell Brandon how to pronounce words while he read out loud in the

small group; and watching Justin, who is reluctant to participate in Guided Reading, share his questions – motivated me to continue coaching my students on how to collaborate and read together. Seeing students, who are reluctant to learn, unmotivated to read, or struggle with using reading strategies, take ownership of their reading, take on a leadership role and collaborate with one another was uplifting. It reminded me to treasure small moments of success and showcased the importance of what can be accomplished when we really listen to what our students need. When the right supports are in place, with time and practice students *can* do what is being asked of them.

Adjusted Teaching Move #3: Optimizing Instructional Minutes

I knew that if I was going to really help my students, I had to spend more time with them outside of the Guided Reading time. I implemented two interventions, Snapshot Conversations and Reading with me Sessions.

Snapshot Conversations

I started to have Snapshot Conversations with students before and after the bell rang. These were brief moments when I checked in with students to remind them of their strategy focus. For instance, Brandon always arrived to class well before any of the other students. I would ask him if he was using the fix-up card to help with his reading outside of reading class. I liked doing the Snapshot Conversations. One, it helped both my students and I remember what we were working on and two, it helped form a positive teacher-student relationship because they noticed I was really listening to them. The little things matter.

QUICK GUIDE: SNAPSHOT CONVERSATIONS

Purpose: To check in with students on their strategy focus and offer encouragement.

When to implement:

- Daily - before or after the bell or a moment during the class period
- Pick 1-2 students
- Brief -2 – 3 minutes

Steps:

- Randomly select 1-2 students
- Ask a question about their strategy focus:
 - “Did you visualize last night when you read?”
 - “Are you ready to work on fix-up strategies today?”
- Offer encouragement:
 - “I am proud of you for trying the strategy.”
 - “That’s great! Keep practicing.”

Figure 13: Guide to Snapshot Conversations

Read with Me Sessions

In addition to the Snapshot Conversations, I began using ten minutes at the beginning of class, which was set aside for students to personal read, to work with students on their missing literacy needs. This time became known as Read with Me. Instead of only listening to students read and following up with a question that involved decoding, vocabulary, or comprehension, I used the personal reading time to hone in on the particular literacy need each of my students was working on. For instance, if a student was working on making connections, we defined the strategy and practiced applying it to

reading. This approach was not expected by the district but was well received by students.

My preparation before a Read with Me involved two things. First, I established a schedule to meet with students during the allotted ten minutes on a specific day, usually two to three students. I was able to meet with each student two to three times per week.

Then, I prepared a form, Personal Reading Follow-Up, for each student. This form includes a place for me to record the title of what the student was reading, the

page number they were on, a notes section for me to jot down my observations while I visited with the student., and a section where students can tell me what type of conference they want to have. I spent about three to four minutes with each student working on a specific reading strategy or skill. I also found it helpful to carry around a clipboard with all of the students Personal Reading Follow-Up forms and

QUICK GUIDE: READ WITH ME SESSIONS

Purpose: To provide additional intervention support in a student's missing literacy area while the student is reading their self-selected book during personal reading time.

When to implement:

- Daily-during the 10 minute independent reading time
- Schedule 2-3 students
- Brief 3 - 4 minutes with each student

Steps:

1. Prior to the class, set up a Read with me schedule (which students will you visit with on which days) and a personal reading follow-up sheet to record your notes during the Read with Me conversation.
2. Opening: Greet the student and ask what they are reading. Establish a connection.
3. Have the student read a small paragraph out loud to you.
4. After the student reads give feedback and praise.
5. Focus on individualized strategy the student is working on.
6. Encourage the student to use the

Figure 14: Guide to Read with me

a timer, so I did not go over time. See Appendix F for an example of the Personal Reading Follow-Up Log and Student Read with Me Schedules. A Read with Me Session went something like this:

Conversation	Teaching Notes
TEACHER: “Hi, Michelle.”	<i>I find the Michelle in the class and sit next to them. Some students want to sprawl out on the floor, some sit behind chairs, some sit on the counter, or some sit at their desk. The informal setting is my favorite thing about Read with Me times. I find it makes it easier for students to respond to my teaching approaches because students feel more comfortable in a less traditional classroom setting.</i>
MICHELLE: “Hi, Ms. Malone.”	
TEACHER: “So can you tell me what you are reading?” (Michelle shows me the front cover of her book.)	
TEACHER: “These are great books!” (I jot down the title, “ <i>I Survived Hurricane Katrina</i> ”). “Okay, great! And what page are you on?”	<i>Greeting Michelle.</i>
MICHELLE: “Thirty-four.”	<i>Teacher identifies the text and page number, while praising Michelle for the effort completed towards reading.</i>
TEACHER: “Wow, Michelle, you have read a lot since last week when you were on page ten.” (I jot down page thirty-four). “How does that make you feel?” (Michelle smiles and tilts her head.)	
MICHELLE: “Pretty good.”	
TEACHER: “Why don’t you read a little for me okay?” (Michelle begins to whisper read).	<i>Teacher builds Michelle’s self-efficacy.</i>
TEACHER: “That was good. Your fluency has become more automatic when you are reading, and I could even hear some prosody too!” (Michelle smiles).	

TEACHER: “So, we’ve been working on using vocabulary strategies when we read. You read the word dilemma, how can you use context clues to define that word dilemma?”

(Michelle and I together locate the word dilemma and practice using the context clues to define what dilemma means.)

Teacher gives Michelle specific feedback on reading.

Teacher focuses on individualized learning.

Teacher works with Michelle to use context clues to define learning.

Working with Michelle in this setting was powerful. In the few minutes I sat with her, I was able to listen to her read, check for comprehension, and practice an instructional reading strategy. Just like the curriculum not being whole group anymore, so was the time spent reading quietly. It became purposeful and personally tailored to my students.

FOUR STUDENT STORIES

This chapter describes the literacy stories of four seventh grade struggling readers: Gigi, Parker, Brandon and Cadence. Their stories show educators how to apply the components to listen to and discover student stories. In essence, the following four student stories teach educators how to change a student's literacy life. Each student story contains the following components: (1) an introduction describing the student; (2) the process of uncovering the student literacy story; (3) how instruction was adjusted and tailored to meet student literacy needs; and (4) an explanation of the student's changed literacy story. As you read each of the four literacy stories, I invite you to keep in mind *your* classroom and *your* students. I encourage you to think about yourself as a teacher and how you can adjust your classroom praxis. A reflection box follows each student story for you to pause and record your thoughts. Now, step inside a classroom.

GIGI: "I JUST READ"

The first time I met seventh grader Gigi, I was standing outside of classroom door 123. The minute bell had just rung and the other students were getting settled into their seats. I thought, "*Really? The first day of school and this girl is going to be late to period one?*" Gigi came down the hall with a bounce in her step. Her long black hair, tied in a loose ponytail, swayed from shoulder to shoulder as she approached me. She wore thick, black-framed glasses. A big smile spread across her face and she greeted me with a, "Good morning, Ms. Malone. I hope you are having a good day?" I smiled back at her. "Good morning, Gigi. I am doing well. How are you?" This became our standard greeting every morning thereafter and one I looked forward to.

Gigi is what teachers call the model student. She does not present the same

reluctant and unmotivated off-task behaviors that most students who have missing literacy skills. Instead, she is energetic about learning, follows class directions and puts effort into her work. She is eager to help out in the classroom, whether that is volunteering to pass out papers or materials or sharing her ideas. When Gigi observes classmates not learning, she does not hesitate to tell them in a stern voice, “If you don’t work, you won’t get to play football” or “If you would just do the work, you would pass.” She also doesn’t shy away from giving me, her teacher, advice. Once, after I told the class a story about my writing frustrations, she calmly told me, “You are too hard on yourself, Ms. Malone.” She is a positive classroom leader, who is respected by peers.

Gigi’s native language is Arabic, and she enjoys and is eager to teach the class how to say and spell greetings in Arabic. Classmates will often ask her, “Gigi how do you say my name? Can you spell it?” She complies with such requests by writing on the whiteboard, while her peers and I curiously watch her hand strokes.

Gigi believes reading is important in order to get a good job. When she gets older, she wants to be a physical therapist. When I asked her how reading will be a part of her future, she lets out a loud chuckle:

Well, Ms. Malone, I will have to read for my job, so I can be educated.

Well, I will have to read somehow. Cuz, like, I don’t know. I want to publish my own book. Because like when you do it, it looks like you are having fun doing it and it’s like why can’t I do it? (Follow-up, Let’s Talk Conference, January 6, 2018).

Discovering Gigi’s Story

I often questioned why Gigi was in my remedial reading support class. She fit the

description of a people pleaser, who learned her positive behaviors helped her succeed and hid her struggles. This made discovering her story even more interesting and important to me. Often, students who are attentive learners get overlooked. They come to class, participate and do not create classroom disruptions. As teachers, we assume these students “get it” and do not need the support or attention that other students who seem withdrawn from school require. Underneath her smile and her positivity, she had an overlooked literacy story. Through our Let’s Talk Conference, I discovered Gigi had positive home literacy experiences and a good attitude towards reading. However, her lack of metacognition created misconceptions on what it meant to be a good reader and interfered with her ability to fully comprehend what she was reading.

“School is My Job.”

During our first Let’s Talk Conference, which took place in the classroom during personal reading time, Gigi sat across from me at the beach smiling with her hands resting in her lap. As Gigi and I talked about her experiences as a reader, it became apparent that her family valued education and literacy. Doing well academically is important to her. Gigi sees her older sister consistently receiving good grades and feels she needs to do the same. Gigi views both her parents and older sister as role models. She shared with me, “School is my job now. My parents push and encourage me to have a good mindset and my sister gets A’s all the time and I want to get A’s too.” (Read with Me Session, November 3, 2017).

Gigi frequently observes her parents reading the newspaper and other articles, which encourages her to read. When I asked her how often her parents read to her, she excitedly shared a childhood memory, “I remember my mom would record oral stories on

this recorder (motions with hands a box shape) so my sister and I could listen to the stories over and over.” (Let’s Talk Conference Interview, October 3, 2017). Having a positive at home literacy experience has equipped Gigi with the disposition to be a confident reader.

“Reading Doesn’t Make Me Feel Bored.”

When I asked Gigi to tell me about her reading habits, such as how often she reads, she looked at me and said that she reads during any spare moment she has. “I read all the time, at home, during the summer, on vacation or driving in the car.” She said reading “doesn’t make me feel bored” and it gives her something to do. When she is not reading, she still thinks about it all the time.

Listening to Gigi express her enthusiasm for reading made me excited. But I questioned if she really enjoyed reading or if she was trying to please me. Often students who are people pleasers in the classroom want to make sure they impress their teacher. These students will follow directions, turn in every assignment, and be an active member of the classroom community. When discovering a student’s story, it is important to take into consideration that the student may be saying what he or she thinks the teacher wants to hear.

When I pushed Gigi to tell me how she would describe herself as a reader, she paused before responding then told me, “Cuz I read. I am a good reader because I read.” Here, Gigi thought just because someone reads the words on the page that they are a good reader. Then, I asked her how she knows that she understands what she is reading. Gigi responded, “Well, um, because, I know what I just read.” When I asked her tell me what she does when she does not understand what she is reading, she responded, “I go back

and read it.” Gigi told me if she is distracted she would just keep reading.

“I Fake Read.”

Gigi loved reading in elementary school. When I asked her during our first Let’s Talk Conference to tell me some of the books she read in elementary, she shared with me two of her favorite book series - *Junie B. Jones* and the *Diary of the Wimpy Kid*. But she hesitantly added that she did not feel as good about reading in elementary as she does now.

Gigi did not receive reading support in elementary school. While she did not dislike reading, she did not feel as good about it as she does as a seventh grader because “no one has explained it.” When I pushed her to tell me more about what she meant, she moved her hands around and said, “Well, this, this class. Everything you teach us. The strategies.”

In sixth grade, Gigi was enrolled in a reading support class that met every other week. When I asked her why she thought she was in reading support she said, “My comprehension isn’t good, and I did not get good grades.” She said last year she just grabbed a book, started reading, and turned the pages. “I used to fake read. I would just look up and start reading or stare. Not much fun. I just thought it was stupid things.” Gigi shared openly about her reading habits as a sixth grader, which alludes to her lack of comprehension.

Adjusting My Teaching

Gigi described herself as an avid reader with grit. Although she identified herself as a “good reader” and found reading to be a pleasurable experience, she was merely going through the actions of reading the words on the page rather than metacognitively

comprehending what those words meant. Our Let's Talk Conference allowed me to uncover how she was reading text. Instead of teaching her a comprehension strategy, such as asking questions outlined in the reading curriculum, we worked on understanding the difference between active and passive readers. This conversation followed subsequent conversations on how active readers constantly monitor their comprehension when reading and use fix-up strategies to clear up any confusion they have during reading. Cris Tovani in her book *I Read it, I But Don't Get It* (2000) presents this comprehension strategy to help readers monitor their reading and repair confusion when meaning breaks down. One of the strategies Gigi used frequently when she became distracted while reading was to reread. Rereading is an effective fix-up strategy, but when Gigi reread she did not reread the text with a different purpose. Instead, she just reread the words, often causing her to *fake read*.

I worked with Gigi during Read with Me times, Snapshot Conversations, and during Guided Reading groups. It took Gigi nearly a quarter and a half of the school year to become independent with the strategies. Her attitude towards reading, her willingness to accept my feedback and practice the strategies with me, as well as independently, made working with her an enjoyable and positive learning experience.

What Makes a Reader?

Following our first Let's Talk Conference, during a Read with Me Session, Gigi and I sat next to each other on the floor. I explained from our Let's Talk Conference that I wanted to focus on two strategies: (1)

Strategy #1

Active Readers:

- Take control of what they are reading.
- Think about what they are reading.
- They ask questions, agree, disagree, and apply the reading to their life.

Passive Readers:

- Do not think about what they are reading.
- Page-turners.

understanding the difference between an active reader and a passive reader and (2) how to monitor reading comprehension and apply fix-up strategies to clear up confusion. On a sheet of notebook paper, I wrote the words active and passive readers. We discussed what makes someone an active reader and what would make someone a passive reader. This conversation went something like this:

TEACHER: "Gigi, how are you doing?"

GIGI: "Good, Ms. Malone."

TEACHER: "Great. So, I want to talk with you about what makes someone a good reader, okay?"

(Gigi looks up and smiles.)

GIGI: "Okay, Ms. Malone."

TEACHER: "So, you told me earlier that a good reader is someone who reads. Do you remember that?"

Strategy# 2

Fix up strategies:

- Make a connection
- Make a prediction
- Ask a question
- Visualize
- Reread
- Adjust your reading rate (slow down or speed up)

Adopted from: Tovani, C. "I Read It, But I Don't Get It." Stenhouse (2000)

GIGI: “Yea.”

TEACHER: “Well, a good reader does more than just read the words on the page. A

good reader enters the pages of a book by using active reading strategies.

Do you know what those are?”

GIGI: “Like what you teach us. Like questioning?”

TEACHER: “That’s right. A good reader uses active reading strategies to help them

comprehend. A passive reader will just read the words and not have any

thoughts.”

(Gigi looks at me.)

TEACHER: “When you are reading, I want you to be an active reader. Today, I

want you to ask one to two questions on each page as you are reading

during your personal reading time. Can you do that?”

GIGI: “Okay, I can do that.”

I gave Gigi a strategy card that listed fix-up strategies for her to use when she recognized she was confused. I told her when her comprehension breaks down to pick one of the strategies to reread the text with a new purpose. She found this card useful and would often reference it during our Read with Me sessions and Guided Reading.

A Reader’s Changed Literacy Story

After a few weeks of working with Gigi on active and passive reading, I followed up during a second Let’s Talk Conference and asked her how she knows what she is reading. This time her response was not simply “I know what I am reading.” Instead she could tell me what she was doing, “Now I am getting into the book and actually reading. I know what is going on. I have thoughts about the book. Like I think about it, the

situations in the book. I try to predict what will happen and want to finish the book to see.” She laughed out loud telling me that she will stay up late until her parents turn off her light because she wants to know what will happen next in her book. She also added that if she doesn’t understand what she is reading, she would use fix-up strategies because “it won’t help if I keep reading.” (Follow-up Let’s Talk Conference, January 6, 2018). Gigi learned to apply self-monitoring strategies to aid her comprehension.

Gigi’s perception of a good reader had changed. She was able to tell me that a good reader is more than someone who simply reads but someone who “knows what is going on.” “While fake reading, you don’t have many thoughts. You won’t know what is going on.”

Moving Forward

Gigi is an exceptional student. She is a positive role model for the class and is enthusiastic about exploring new literacy experiences. Although she may have learned to act this way because she knows what it is expected of her, she is not shy to express her struggles. School is important to her and valued in her family.

My follow-up plan with Gigi included reading with her during Read with Me sessions, as well as working with her at Guided Reading. I wanted to continue monitoring her use of the fix-up strategies when reading and push her to become a more independent, active reader. Additionally, I made a conscious effort to notice her daily since students who share her demeanor often are overlooked.

Pause & Reflect

Please take a moment to think about these questions:

- 1. What components can you take back to your classroom after reading Gigi's story?*
- 2. What are your most powerful insights about teaching struggling readers from reading Gigi's story?*
- 3. What burning questions do you have?*

PARKER: “THE WORDS. THE WORDS MAKE IT FRUSTRATING.”

Brring. The school bell rings, and I shout over chatter and chairs being pushed in, “Have a good Monday students. I’ll see you tomorrow!” Parker walks over to me and waves his purple behavior goal sheet in front of me. He wears a white Nebraska Husker hoodie with a big red N plastered on the front. His personal reading book, *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson, hangs loosely in his hands.

The purple goal sheet guides Parker to be more focused throughout his school day. Three behaviors are highlighted: be safe, be responsible, and be respectful. Teachers circle a numerical number under each goal,

either a zero, one, or two based on how he did throughout the class period. Sometimes the goal sheet is effective in keeping Parker focused.

Parker is easily distracted during class time. He tips in his chair, taps his pencil, or zips and unzips his Chromebook case, which bothers some students. Students often shout at him to be quiet or to stop tapping. He became a behavior child, a phrase often used by teachers, instead of Parker. Yet, he is the same student who runs down the hallway, meets me at the classroom door, and burst into tears every time his dad drops him off late.

Teacher Talk #6

It is crucial for teachers to converse with students on selecting a personal reading book at their independent reading level. Social acceptance from peers often causes students to select books that do not match their independent reading level. Instead of enjoying reading, they experience frustration and resistance.

Parker, for example started reading the book, *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson, which was too challenging for him. I like to have open conversations with students on how to select appropriate books. Jessica Wutz and Linda Wedwick’s book selection technique called Bookmatch guides students in selecting appropriate books. Please see the Appendix I.

TEACHER: “Okay, let’s see here. Were you being respectful today in class? Zero, one, or a two?”

PARKER: “Hmm...a two?” Parker says adjusting his computer bag in his hand.

TEACHER: “Yes, I agree with that. (I say circling a two.) “Okay, do you think you were responsible today in getting your assignments complete and keeping your hands and feet to yourself?”

PARKER: “A two.”

TEACHER: “Yea, you did well today. I liked your effort.” (I tell him, circling a two.) “Were you safe?”

PARKER: “Um...I think so?” (He looks out into the hallway.)

TEACHER: “You tipped in your chair and almost fell over, buddy. A one.”

PARKER: “Okay.” (Parker replies giving a sly smile.)

TEACHER: (I hand him his sheet back.) “Did you have a nice weekend?”

(He shrugs his shoulders and tells me, “Well, Mrs. Malone, have a good day.”)

Discovering Parker’s Story

Full disclosure. I questioned writing Parker’s story. I did not know if he had a story worth telling. I was caught up in his classroom behavior, constantly reminding him, “Parker, can you please stop tipping in your chair.” “Parker, please stop tapping your pencil.” “Parker, you know the school policy, no hoods.” I questioned what would educators learn from his story.

When I really started listening and observing Parker outside of circling numbers on his goal sheet and my constant scolding, I realized I was not supporting his learning but was letting his behaviors lead. Listening takes patience. To *really* listen to a student

requires pushing aside all of their annoying nuances to reach the core of who they are.

I've included Parker's story. Everyone has a story. *Everyone*. Some stories just take more time to uncover.

Parker shared his reading experiences with me during our first Let's Talk Conference. He was not overly excited as some students were to talk with me, but he was not uncooperative either. He wanted to do our Let's Talk Conference during class time, so he would not miss out on recess. Our conversation, though a brief five minutes, was enough to help me learn how to support Parker in his missing literacy skills. Through our Let's Talk Conference, I discovered Parker had positive home literacy experiences and a genuine attitude towards reading. However, his misconceptions on what it meant to be a fluent reader interfered with his ability to fully comprehend.

“Reading helps me fall asleep.”

Parker enjoys reading. He has been surrounded by positive reading experiences, which have contributed to his understanding that reading is important. Reading “gives you more knowledge and makes you smarter.” He reads at home every night when he is done with homework. He says, “I get tired when I read. It kinda helps me fall asleep at night.” During the summer he never reads because he would rather hang out with his stepsister and stepbrother. When he was younger, he doesn't remember his parents ever reading to him but commented that his dad reads Stephen King books and “encourages him to read.” (Let's Talk Conference October 5th, 2017).

“I liked reading in elementary.”

In elementary school, Parker remembers someone taking him out of the class to read with him. He said this person would tell him they were going to “practice reading,”

but he could not remember any specifics of what he did with this person. Parker liked reading in elementary school saying, “reading was pretty easy. I knew all the words from it. It [the books] had normal, small words.” He also liked elementary because “my teachers always read to me.” Parker referenced *Maniac McGee* by Jerry Spinelli as his favorite read aloud. Listening to his teachers read aloud was an instructional practice Parker enjoyed. He told me during our first Let’s Talk Conference that he “really likes this,” adding “Some of my teachers will [read aloud]. Um...it’s pretty good when they read to me because when I am reading a book to myself and when they read a book aloud I get what they are talking about - like what’s happening in the book.” (Let’s Talk Conference October 5th, 2017).

“I am a good reader because I have good fluency.”

Even though Parker has had positive experiences with reading, he also has learned misconceptions about what makes a person a good reader. Parker described himself as a good reader because, “I am able to read fluently.” However, a fluent reader reads texts with automaticity, accuracy and correct pace. Parker had difficulties with reading text accurately.

Parker referenced several times during Let’s Talk Conference, Read with Me sessions, and during Guided Reading that “the words made reading frustrating.” For instance, he likes to read comic books because of the pictures and finds them funny, but when he “can’t understand the words, that um makes it frustrating.” During a Read with Me Session on November 11th, 2017, Parker was reading *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds. After reading a chunk of text, I asked Parker how he felt about his reading. He told me, “learning new words is frustrating.” When I further asked him how he sees himself as a

reader in the future, he again placed an emphasis on reading the words: “I want to be a good reader. Someone who does not have to stop between words and can keep going.”

Additionally, in our first Let’s Talk Conference on October 5th, 2017, Parker, at several points throughout the conversation, referenced “the words” as making reading difficult for him. Here is part of our conversation:

TEACHER: “So, Parker, how do you know you understand what you are reading?”

PARKER: “Um...I don’t know how to describe it...I already know the words, then I keep reading. A picture will automatically pop into my head.”

TEACHER: “Okay, so what do you do when you don’t understand what you are reading?”

PARKER: “When I don’t understand it?”

TEACHER: “Yes.”

PARKER: “Well, um, when I don’t understand it, I start to think um what is this word. Have I seen it before or what do I think it might mean. Or I will ask my parents or teachers what this word means.”

Parker was associating vocabulary knowledge with text comprehension. He was able to self-monitor and recognize when vocabulary words did not make sense and seek out support from his parents or teachers to define a word’s meaning. Parker needed support to develop vocabulary awareness strategies, in decoding multisyllabic words and using context clues to decipher meaning. The words on the page were halting Parker’s reading comprehension. Uncovering how Parker read allowed me to tailor my instruction to fit his literacy needs.

Adjusting My Instruction

Working with Parker felt too easy. He did not push against my instruction. He never asked questions. I often wondered how much of what I was saying he internalized or if he was simply going through the motions and not processing what was actually happening. A typical follow up response from Parker was “sure,” or “Yea, I can try that.” During Read with Me sessions, as I talked with him at his table, Parker tipped in his chair and tapped his pencil. I annoyingly reminded him, “Parker, refocus.” Other days, as I went over our class agenda, Parker carried on a conversation with his table partner Eric until I reminded him, he should not be talking. Yet, he never failed to make me smile. When the principal’s announcement over the intercom to stand for the pledge was followed by a long pause, Parker whispered to me, “And here is the long wait, Ms. Malone.” We chuckled. I implemented two instructional strategies to help Parker improve his missing literacy skills.

Let’s Read

Parker’s literacy need was learning to become a more careful reader. He had a habit of reading text fast with no self-monitoring or attention to the words. Parker recognized that the words made reading hard for him. I started to read aloud with Parker more often. Parker had indicated that he enjoyed having his teachers read aloud to him. Listening to a read aloud helped him understand the text easier. During our first Read with Me session, I shared with Parker that I wanted him to slow his reading speed and become more of an attentive reader. Sitting at his table area, our conversation went something like this:

TEACHER: “So, Parker, why don’t you read aloud this paragraph.” I point at a

page opened in his personal reading book sitting in his lap.

PARKER: "Sure."

TEACHER: "Can you put the book on the table?" I tap the table with my fingers.

"So, I can read silently with you?" Parker puts the book on table and begins reading the paragraph out loud. "Thanks for reading that. I am going to reread the paragraph you just read out loud to me. I am going to read it two times. I want you to listen and tell me which reading you understand better. Make sense?"

PARKER: "Yea."

I slide the book closer in front of me. The first time I read the paragraph, I read at a fast speed, much like Parker when he read. The second read is much slower. I read with intonation, pausing at periods, and commas, adding inflection in my voice when necessary.

TEACHER: "Okay Parker, which one?"

PARKER: "Um, the second one."

TEACHER: "Tell me why."

PARKER: "It was slower."

TEACHER: "And because I read slower what made it different from reading that paragraph faster?"

PARKER: "I could - it made more sense to me, I guess."

TEACHER: "I want you to understand that when we read it is important to adjust our reading speed for what we are reading." Parker looks at me. "Let me give you an example. My daughter Schyler can write really nice, but her

handwriting is often a scribbly mess. Parker lets out a laugh. When I talked to her teacher about my concern with her handwriting, the teacher told me this, are you ready?” Parker looks at me and smiles.

PARKER: “Sure.”

TEACHER: “The teacher told me that we write for different purposes. Sometimes we need to write really nice like if we are writing a letter to grandmother. Do you write letters?” Parker gives me a questioning look.)

PARKER: “Um no.”

TEACHER: “But sometimes we need to write really fast to get our notes jotted down. We read for different purposes, too. So, when reading text to extract information, such as academic reading, or a personal letter, reading speed slows. But, when we read for enjoyment or to quickly get information reading rate may increase.” Parker nods his head. “I want you to practice being a more attentive reader. Can you do that?”

PARKER: “I guess.”

During Read with Me sessions, Parker and I worked on being a more careful reader. This meant listening to fluent reading and developing vocabulary awareness. We read from his personal reading book. This served two purposes. First, it was his self-selected reading material so that he would be engaged to read, and second it gave me an opportunity to see if the book he selected was appropriate for his reading level. Even though I have conversations with students on how to select a book for personal reading, often students, for a variety of reasons, still select books that are above their independent reading level. Some students do not want others seeing them read the “little books” and

others struggle finding a book that is interesting to them. Reading material that is not at a student's appropriate reading level often creates a feeling of self-doubt. The text is still too difficult for them to read and they do not see themselves as successful.

When reading with Parker, I selected a paragraph, usually one that he has either just read or would be reading, to read aloud to him. Before reading, I suggested that he observe how I pronounce words, read at a correct pace for the text passage, and read with prosody. As I read, Parker read silently or whisper read with me. After reading, we discussed what he noticed about my reading and then I modeled a comprehension check. I then had Parker explain his thinking process to me. For instance, I asked him to tell me what he visualized while I read or a thought that passed through his mind.

I also helped Parker develop vocabulary awareness to decode and decipher word meaning. These strategies included decoding words by locating the vowels and breaking the word into syllable parts, identifying a word part that he could say, or associating the word with something familiar and using context clues to decipher a word's meaning. A Read with Me session with Parker sounded like this:

TEACHER: "Hi, Parker. Can you show me where you are at in your book?"

PARKER: "Uh..." His finger traces over words in his book. "Here." (Points to the middle of the page.)

TEACHER: "Perfect. Now this week you are working on clarifying, right?"

PARKER: "Yea."

TEACHER: "Can you tell me what it means to clarify?" (A pause.)

PARKER: "When you look at words you don't understand."

TEACHER: "Yup and remember phrases and ideas in the text. Okay, why don't

you go ahead and read that paragraph aloud.” I point to the text and Parker starts to read. When he gets to the word malfunction I hear hesitation in his voice. He is able to pronounce the first part “mal’ but stumbles over function.

TEACHER: “Okay, so you have the first part, “mal.” Now look at this second part.” (I cover up “mal.”) “What part in this word can you read?” (A pause. Parker stares at the word.)

PARKER: “um /tion/”

TEACHER: “Yes! Great. Now we have this part /func/ let’s decode this.” (Together we decode this word part and then he blends the parts together to pronounce malfunction.)

TEACHER: “What do you think malfunction means?”

PARKER: “I don’t know.”

TEACHER: “‘Mal’ is a prefix that means bad. Reread this sentence with malfunction and let’s use the words around malfunction to help us understand what malfunction means.

Parker cooperated during our Read with Me sessions. He practiced the strategy I encouraged him to use with my support. However, he did not use the strategy independently during Guided Reading time, indicating he was not yet automatic in applying the strategy during reading and still needed additional support.

Choral + Sum It Up

I implemented a second instructional practice known as Choral + Sum It Up Reading. This approach can be used in whole group, within a guided reading group or

one-on-one between teacher and student. In this example, I show you how to use it in a small group setting. As I discussed in the introduction, sometimes curriculum or instructional routines focused on a school-wide goal are mandated. My school district, at the time of writing this book, required teachers to implement the instructional practices of Anita Archer, as a method to engage all students in the learning process. While whole group lessons are counter examples of my push to work more at the student level, I have included this approach to help you understand how to put your own spin on instruction, when curriculum is mandated.

Anita Archer along with her colleague, Charles Hughes, in their book, *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching* (2011), define choral reading as an instructional reading strategy where all students read together with the teacher. I wanted my students to read text but also to *think* about what we were reading. After my students and I read a chunk of text together, usually a good size paragraph, we completed Sum It Up as a way for students to monitor their comprehension, during choral read with the group. I stated key ideas from the paragraph and the students repeated it back. This sounded something like this:

TEACHER: “Okay, so we are starting with Six Legged Workers. What are we starting with?”

STUDENTS: “Six Legged Workers.”

TEACHER: “Ready? So, we are starting with the first word in the paragraph can, what are we starting with?”

STUDENTS: “Can.”

TEACHER: "Ready eyes on can. What word are we on?"

STUDENTS: "Can."

(Students and I read together the first paragraph on Six-Legged Worker, then stop.)

TEACHER: "Pause. Okay, so this paragraph talked about ants. What did it talk about?"

STUDENTS: "Ants."

TEACHER: "And in this paragraph, we learned an ant can lift a load fifty times heavier than itself. How many times heavier?"

STUDENTS: "Fifty times."

TEACHER: "And we also learned that they have to carry their food from their homes to places very far away. So, we learned ants have to do what with their food?"

STUDENTS: "Carry it far away."

TEACHER: "So to do this they must be very strong. They must be what?"

STUDENTS: "Very strong."

Choral + Sum It Up engaged Parker and the other students during Guided Reading and simultaneously modeled fluent reading. However, I recommend doing this instructional approach occasionally as a whole group lesson. Students need time to practice reading text independently to develop reading stamina and automaticity in order to think about what they are reading.

A Reader's Changed Literacy Story

When I started to shuffle through Parker's classroom data, adjusting my teaching for his learning style, I began to see him as a different student. During our January 17, 2018, Let's Talk Conference, I realized that because I paused and stepped back from this student who drums his pencil in class, I was able to put in place the necessary literacy supports he needed. Parker shared with me how he changed as a reader by developing reading strategies and understanding what it means to be a good reader when he comes to a word he doesn't know: "[I] Think about what the word could mean. Um, sometimes I will try and like picture um what it means or reread it." He also described a good reader, not just as someone who reads fluently, as he did before, but someone who is able to *think* about what they are reading. "Someone who can read fluently and understand what is happening in the book. Like not stopping and can read pretty much through the whole book and can get through it." He commented that his favorite strategy was the Choral + Sum It Up because it helped him understand what he is reading more. "Um...when you let us do the thing when you are reading and we say the word..." he understands what he is reading because "a picture pops into my head." Reading became more than reading the words off the page, but rather thinking about what the words meant.

Moving Forward

Underneath the pencil drumming student was a seventh grader who wanted to become a better reader. When I adjusted my teaching instruction for Parker, he listened and applied the strategy. His moments of success nudged him to practice the strategies that I encouraged him to use. My follow-up plan with Parker was to continue helping him use vocabulary strategies to improve his comprehension of text.

Even as I finished writing Parker's story, I still questioned what else I could have done to help Parker. Though I worked with him on developing his vocabulary awareness and thinking about reading, I continually felt there was something more I did not uncover. I continued to follow up with Parker by making it a point to schedule frequent Read with Me Sessions and Snapshot Conversations and to encourage him to open up more about his literacy needs. I do not know how much he genuinely retained from what I was teaching him because without my support he did not independently apply the vocabulary strategies. Parker reminds me some students require more attention to uncover what instruction they need and more time to develop. Scheduling additional Let's Talk Conference, more frequent Read with Me Sessions and Snapshot Conversations may be necessary with students similar to Parker.

Pause & Reflect

Please take a moment to think about these questions:

- 1. What components can you take back to your classroom after reading Parker's story?*
- 2. What are your most powerful insights about teaching struggling readers from reading Parker's story?*
- 3. What burning questions do you have?*

BRANDON: "I DON'T WANT TO GET ON THE TEACHER'S BAD SIDE."

TEACHER: "Hi, Brandon. (I say as I sat down next to him on the floor.) "Are you ready to read to me?"

BRANDON: "Yea." (His voice is quiet.) "I am right here." He points to the paragraph he is about to start reading in his book *Our Plane is Down* by Doug Patton and begins.

This was our first Read with Me. Listening to Brandon read, I could tell he was a fluent reader. He read the text at an appropriate reading pace with accuracy and prosody. When he did mispronounce a word, he stopped and decoded the words into syllable parts. This showed me he was able to self-monitor when the words were confusing and apply the necessary fix up strategies to decode and decipher the word meaning. However, when I asked Brandon basic literal comprehension questions, such as what the character is doing, he hesitated to respond.

TEACHER: "Brandon, you read that chunk of text well. I liked how you read the word portable, paused and then went back to decode the word correctly. Do you know what you were doing there?" Brandon moves his head in a side to side motion. "You were monitoring your comprehension! You recognized 'hey, this does not make sense' and went back to fix-up the confusing part. Can you tell me what your character was doing?" Brandon looks down in his book. He starts rubbing his palm on his pant leg.

BRANDON: "I'm sorry."

TEACHER: "You do not need to apologize. When you read that paragraph were you thinking and visualizing the story?"

BRANDON: “No.” Brandon responds in a quiet voice.

Brandon is a spunky, ruffled blonde haired seventh grader who holds the school pacer (a 20-meter fitness test that gets progressively harder after each lap) record of 100 for seventh grade boys. The average 7th grade boy runs 45-50 laps. He enters our classroom daily with a big grin and a contagious, positive attitude. Every day he has a new story to share with me, “I am so sore from practice last night.” “We are still redoing the wood floor; it is taking forever!” Sitting in the front row, he waves his hands in the air to grab my attention and hopes I call on him first to respond. When I do not, he blurts out. Often, Brandon’s voice interjects the principal’s announcements, “Why does he have to tell us the same thing every day, Ms. Malone!”

Discovering Brandon’s Story

Uncovering Brandon’s literacy story took time. After our first Let’s Talk Conference, I questioned Brandon’s missing literacy skills. Brandon had the motivation to read and, from what I gathered from listening to him, the skill to read. He read fluently but comprehension occurred randomly. He was surrounded by positive home literacy experiences and understood the importance of reading. However, Brandon was often a distracted reader, which caused him to lose focus when reading and break up his comprehension.

“Reading is sometimes good, sometimes bad.”

Brandon has received reading support since elementary school. During elementary, Brandon remembers someone taking him out of the classroom to work on his reading. He enjoyed that because the other students talking often distracted him. Now in middle school, Brandon has been in a reading support class for both his sixth and seventh

grade years. Despite his need for reading support, Brandon, for the most part, enjoys reading. He only feels bad about reading when, “I see kids in the neighborhood outside playing football and mom wants me to read a book.” He described himself as an active reader because, “If you read a bunch, you know what you are reading.”

“Reading helps in daily life.”

Positive at-home literacy experiences have helped Brandon develop a good attitude about reading. He says reading, “helps in daily life” and if “you don’t read, you might mess up on a job.” His mom is a positive role model for him. She “reads the bible every night,” and he also claims they “. . . read together a lot.” At a parent teacher conference meeting, I had an aha! moment about Brandon as a reader and a student. I barely heard her quiet voice over the loud murmur of parent-teacher conversations.

“Hi, I am Brandon Prescott’s mom.” I look up from grading papers. A tall woman with long blonde hair pulled loosely back in a ponytail stands in front of me. She wears dark blue hospital scrubs.

“Hi! I am Ms. Malone. It is so nice to meet you,” I say, extending my hand.

We exchange the standard ‘hello, how are you doing?’ greeting before taking our seats on the black fold up chairs. She leans over the small black folding table that separates us.

BRANDON’S MOM: “So, how is he doing in reading?” There is uneasiness in her voice.

I explain Brandon’s literacy progress, his strengths with reading fluency, his motivation towards reading, and my concern with his reading comprehension. She nods and smiles halfway, as if she has heard this all before. I pause.

TEACHER: "I think Brandon is a distracted reader." (She sits up a little more and tilts her head to the side.) "I have noticed when Brandon gets distracted in class, he stumbles comprehending the text we are reading, but, when he is attentive, his reading comprehension is there."

At the end of the conference, she told me she appreciated my support with Brandon and added Brandon likes to please his teachers. Instead of expressing his needs, he struggles through the text because he does not want to risk getting told no. He does what he is asked. She mentioned Brandon struggles when he cannot do something or when he feels like he is disappointing the teacher. She encouraged me to give him praise and recognition when I see him making progress.

In a Let's Talk Conference on January 12, 2018, Brandon reinforced what his mom had told me during the parent teacher conference meeting. When I asked Brandon how he felt about reading when it is required and he does not want to do it, he told me, "I just do it, so, I don't get on the teacher's bad side." In this same conversation, I asked Brandon what he needed from his teachers to help him comprehend the text better. His face lit up and he explained what he and his mom have been doing at night together:

My mom bought colored pencils, highlighters. We have these journaling Bibles. I like reading the Bible. As we read, my mom has us underline what we like and we can even draw pictures on the side. I like reading it and drawing the pictures. It helps me understand it. (January 12, 2018, Let's Talk Conference).

When Brandon interacted, coded, and highlighted the text, he understood what he was reading. The coding helped Brandon because it encouraged him to slow his reading

and become a more attentive reader. I asked Brandon if he ever interacts with the text at school like his mom taught him. He told me, “sometimes I stop and think about what I am reading or I just keep reading. I can’t highlight or write in the book, so I just read it because I want to play in the Mickle basketball game on Saturday.” Brandon’s compliance caused him to not use the literacy supports that he needed to improve his reading comprehension. The Let’s Talk Conference allowed me to uncover the roadblocks interfering with Brandon’s overall literacy skills, which may not have surfaced naturally in the classroom otherwise.

Adjusting My Teaching Moves

Brandon’s comprehension breaks down when he is not attentive to reading. His mind is a movie, clicking on and off. His comprehension occurs in bursts. Brandon needed to interact with the text to help him extract important information and understand what is happening. During a Read with Me session, Brandon and I had a conversation like this:

TEACHER: “Do you watch movies or a television program?” (Brandon looks at me like I just asked a ridiculous question.)

BRANDON: “Um, yea.”

TEACHER: “So when you are watching your favorite movie or television program you see a picture on the screen, right?”

BRANDON: “Yea.”

TEACHER: “The picture helps you understand what is happening. Now, you have siblings, so let’s pretend your little sister runs up and turns the television off. Would she do that?”

BRANDON: "Probably!"

TEACHER: "Meanwhile, while you have been chasing your little sister around the house, your show hasn't stopped. When you finally return to watching your show, it can be hard to understand what is going on because you missed a portion of the show. Reading is similar. When you are distracted during reading with your thoughts or by others, the picture inside your head clicks off. When you refocus a paragraph or two later and your picture clicks back on you may be confused on what you have been reading." (Brandon looks at me nodding. I told Brandon we were going to work on becoming a more attentive reader by using his coding strategy.)

Coding the Text

During Guided Reading, I put Brandon's reading passage in a sheet protector and gave him different highlighters to code his text. The different color of highlights represented one of our seven active reading strategies - clarifying, predicting, asking questions, making connections, inferring, visualizing or summarizing. Linda Christensen from *Teaching for Joy and Justice* (2009) advocates using the highlighting strategy to help students annotate text. Certain elements of

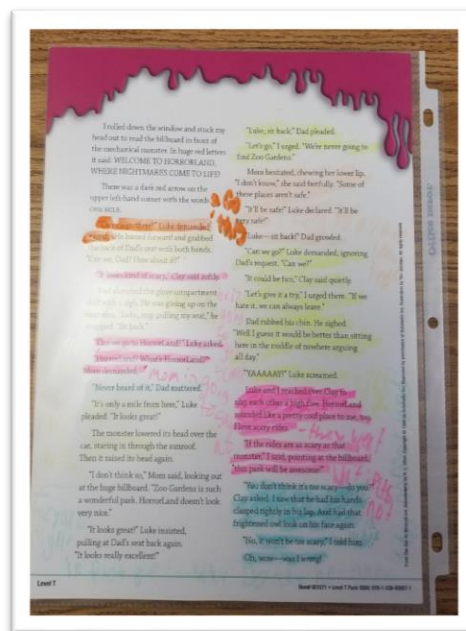


Figure 15: Example of Brandon's Coding.

the text are made visible to students and they can easily see how they are interpreting the text. I also used the post-it note strategy Kyleene Beers describes in her book, *When Kids*

Can't Read and What Teachers Can Do (2002). The post-it note strategy encourages students to be active readers by writing down thoughts when they read. I gave Brandon a stack of sticky notes so that he could write down his thoughts when writing in the book was not possible and to encourage him to be an active reader.

When Brandon was able to code his text during reading, I saw his confidence as a reader grow. He became more involved in Guided Reading and wanted to read the passage. When I first worked with him, he only coded text instead of recording his thoughts in his Guided Reading book. My goal was to get Brandon to understand that active readers use multiple strategies simultaneously to aid comprehension. I also needed him to become comfortable interacting with the text using all of the seven strategies. As Brandon coded his text, I quickly scanned his passage to see which reading strategies were occurring naturally and where his comprehension was breaking down. In figure one, Brandon was predicting, asking questions, visualizing and clarifying. However, there were chunks of text that had no coding, suggesting comprehension was not occurring.

Using Fix Up Strategies

During Read with Me sessions, I worked with Brandon on how to use fix-up strategies when the movie in his mind clicked off. I gave Brandon a blue card with a list of fix-up strategies. Please see Figure 16.

At a second parent teacher conference, his mom thanked me for the card, telling me Brandon uses it all the time when reading. The blue card became his bookmark. When I read with Brandon or worked with him during Guided Reading and his comprehension started to break down, we pulled out his blue card. These conversations went something like this:

TEACHER: "You read that chunk of text well. I see you did not do any coding

(pointing to the blank text), tell me about that."

BRANDON: "I don't know."

TEACHER: "Okay, so it looks like you were not comprehending here. What have we been working on when you do not understand what you read?"

BRANDON: "Use my fix-up card."

TEACHER: "Yes. How do you want to fix-up your confusion here?" (Brandon picks up the card and points to reread.) "Rereading is a great strategy. When you are rereading what do you want to focus on?"

BRANDON: "Ask a question."

TEACHER: "Okay, so why don't you reread this chunk to me and, inside your mind, I want you to think, hmm, what is something I am wondering about? Also, maybe you should try to slow your reading down a little. Let me hear your prosody when you read. Reading is meant for enjoyment. Take your time. Sound okay?"

BRANDON: "Yea."

TEACHER: "So, what does Ms. Malone want you to do?"

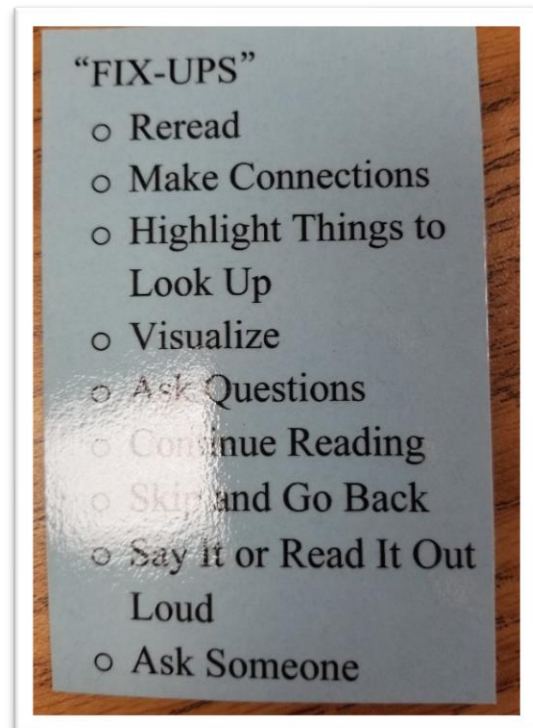


Figure 16: Fix-Up Strategy Card

BRANDON: "Reread the text and focus on asking questions."

TEACHER: "And..."

BRANDON: "Oh, don't read so fast."

TEACHER: "Perfect!"

A Reader's Changed Literacy Story

Growing as a reader takes time and patience. For Brandon that required him to apply himself in new ways to break his old reading habits and form new ones. As Brandon's teacher, I had to become more patient, offering him frequent praise and ongoing specific feedback to keep him engaged toward improving his literacy.

Together, Brandon and I worked over three quarters on becoming an interactive and attentive reader. It took well into the beginning of fourth quarter for Brandon to become automatic in interacting with the text. During a Read with Me Session, I sat down next to him as he read and answered the questions I asked. Before I left to read with another student, this conversation occurred:

TEACHER: "I noticed you do not have your blue card anymore?"

BRANDON: "I don't really use that anymore. I guess I just do it now."

BRANDON: "Is that okay?"

BRANDON: "Yes! Yes! That was supposed to happen." (I smile.)

Moving Forward

Discovering Brandon's literacy story changed him as a reader while at the same time cultivated me as a teacher. First, Brandon taught me that even as a seasoned teacher, my biases are very much present. I assumed that since Brandon struggled with reading, he came from a home environment where literacy experiences existed very little or if at

all. However, this was not the case with Brandon. His mom was active in Brandon's school experiences and provided him with rich literacy experiences at home. In short, my assumption became a roadblock in learning his literacy story.

Gathering student information from parents or guardians, past teachers, or observations in the classroom impacts student learning. Brandon's mom offered me insight about Brandon as a past student I had not known. I was able to use the information she provided and support Brandon more in the classroom. Forming a positive parent-teacher partnership is critical for student success in school, especially students with years of needed support.

Pause & Reflect

Please take a moment to think about these questions:

- 1. What components can you take back to your classroom after reading Brandon's story?*
- 2. What are your most powerful insights about teaching struggling readers from reading Brandon's story?*
- 3. What burning questions do you have?*

CADENCE: “I HAVE FAILED MYSELF.”

CADENCE: “I did it, Ms. Malone! I did it!”

TEACHER: I am writing our agenda for the day on the board. “Hi, Cadence!” I say turning around.

TEACHER: “What did you do that has made you so excited?”

CADENCE: “I reached my goal. My reading goal!”

TEACHER: “That’s great, Cadence! How does that make you feel?” I say, smiling at her.

CADENCE: “Good. I wanted to read five pages last night, but I read twenty-five!”

We high five and she bounces back to her seat arranging her computer on her table.

This is seventh grader Cadence. Every morning she enters our classroom with her pink water bottle in tow and her black computer bag slung over her shoulder. She is cheerful as she greets me, “Hi, Ms. Malone!” She is the first student to arrive to class and the last student to leave. She sits in the front row, not because I have officially assigned her there but because she feels more focused. Cadence enjoys learning and consistently gives her best effort. Once a student asked her how she knew how to make an inference during Guided Reading, she confidently looked at them and said, “I just pay attention.” When other students are not learning, she never hesitates to turn around in her seat and tell them to “Be Quiet.” or “You are going to fail. Just do the work.”

Cadence is an eager learner who enjoys reading. She feels good about reading, despite the absence of home literacy experiences. Cadence does not remember her mom reading to her when she was little, and says, “she [Mom] never reads and is always on her

phone.” However, Cadence values reading, saying, “We do it every day and it is important for getting the job I want.” When Cadence gets older she wants to be either a caseworker or a math teacher.

Discovering Cadence’s Story

At our first Let’s Talk Conference, I sat next to Cadence at the Guided Reading table in our classroom. Cadence chose to do her Let’s Talk Conference over lunch instead of during the class period to have more time to talk. Cadence plops her lunch tray down and sits next to me.

CADENCE: “How’s your day going Ms. Malone?”

TEACHER: “Good. How about yours?”

CADENCE: “Meh, not bad.” She smears her tater tots in ketchup and drops one in her mouth.

TEACHER: “Okay, why don’t we get started. I am going to ask you some questions, so I can learn more about you as a reader and your literacy needs. Sound okay?”

CADENCE: “Sure.” She says opening her white milk carton.

In our fifteen-minute conversation over white milk and crispy tater tots, I learned Cadence had a limited understanding of what it meant to be a good reader, which interfered with her ability to comprehend text and set realistic goals. Additionally, being in a reading class as a seventh grader made her feel like a failure. Discovering Cadence had a negative self-concept helped me tailor my instruction to her needs. I realized if she was going to make any literacy gains building her confidence had to be placed at the center of my instruction.

“I Am a Good Reader Because I Read *Fast*.”

Cadence had a misconception about what makes someone a good reader. She described herself as a good reader because “I can read fast.” In my experience as a reading teacher, students associate reading speed with reading achievement. Students think reading at a quick pace signifies a good reader, whereas a slower pace suggests struggle. Cadence labeled herself a good reader because of her speed not because she was *thinking* about the text. However, when I worked with Cadence, her assumption that a fast reader is a good reader was contradicted. I noticed while she read at a fast pace, she stumbled over multisyllabic words. In a Read with Me session on September 14, 2017, Cadence read a paragraph from her book *Paper Things* by Jennifer Jacobson. She did not pause at periods or commas and when she came to multisyllabic words, she hesitated and then skipped over them. Our conversation sounded something like this:

Conversation	Teaching Notes
<p>TEACHER: “Cadence, I noticed when you were reading, you did not pause at the periods or commas. You just read straight through them. Then when you came to this word (I point at the word complimented in her book), you skipped it.”</p> <p>(Cadence looks at me.)</p> <p>TEACHER: “I want you to slow your reading down. Remember reading is meant to take time, so we can feel what is happening in the story. Stop at the periods and pause at the commas. Okay?”</p> <p>CADENCE: “Yea.”</p> <p>TEACHER: “Now, tell me what you were thinking about as you read that paragraph</p>	<p>Sharing with Cadence what I observed from her reading.</p> <p>Giving specific feedback with an explanation for why.</p>

out loud.”

CADENCE: “Hmm, I guess I was making a connection with the character.”

TEACHER: “So, what do you do when you cannot make a connection with the text?”

CADENCE: “I will reread. Or I just ask my family about it. But when I am reading big words and longer passages, I stop reading.”

I let Cadence share with me her thoughts. She tells me she understands what she is reading because she makes connections to the text.

Here I check to see if she is self-monitoring and using fix-up strategies.

Cadence demonstrates help-seeking behavior, a positive for students who struggle. However, she is unable to list other fix up strategies, such as vocabulary strategies.

Cadence’s misconception that a good reader reads fast contributed to her feeling like a failure because she was in a reading support class.

“I Failed Myself.”

Most students consider being in a reading support class disheartening, as they are unable to participate in classes such as PE, art, computer or music. Students have told me, “This class is stupid; I can read” or “Having a reading class in the morning is just dumb.” Cadence shared similar feelings about being in the reading class. During our initial Let’s Talk Conference, Cadence’s negative self-concept – how she perceived herself as a reader and as a seventh grader surfaced. “I’ve disappointed myself because I am in reading class. I have failed myself. I thought I was good at reading. But now I am here.” (Let’s Talk Conference, October 3, 2017).

Although being in a reading class made her feel like a failure, she was positive towards the experience of reading, saying reading, “feels good.” Cadence and I had this

conversation about her feeling like a failure:

Conversation	Teaching Notes
TEACHER: “So, why do you feel you are in a reading support class then?”	
CADENCE: “One reason is that I think my teacher did not help me he just gave us the answers to the test and he’d like tell us this is how you do it and let us do it by ourselves and not give us any explanation. I read books all the time.”	Cadence was either not communicated about being in a reading support class or was not receptive to it. Her external attribution prevents her from recognizing her missing literacy skill.
TEACHER: “So, what do you do now since you are in a reading class?”	
CADENCE: “I want to keep doing it...pushing myself to get out [of a reading support class].	Cadence experienced a temporary failure. She still had the will to improve, whereas other students, whose failure has become internal, immediately shut down. These are the students who put their head on the desk and disconnect from the classroom learning experience or refuse to participate.

Adjusting My Teaching

After discovering Cadence’s reading story, I learned how to tailor my instruction to fit her individual learning needs. I wanted to build her confidence, while simultaneously teaching her how to become a more active reader by understanding what makes someone a good reader. Cadence was receptive of the strategies that I taught her. She strived to do her best, which at times faulted her when she needed more of my support.

Providing Praise and Feedback

One of the first things Cadence and I worked on was changing her negative self-

concept. I wanted to build her confidence by setting more realistic and attainable goals.

Cadence set high expectations for herself and when she did not reach those expectations, she became discouraged. She felt like a failure and I wanted to show her that being in a reading class did not label her as such.

From my classroom observations, I knew Cadence was hard on herself and set unrealistic expectations. I realized her unrealistic goal setting, though effective towards helping her read more text, created a feeling of failure when she did not attain her reading goal. On her blue sheet, a half sheet of paper students record their personal reading thoughts, Cadence and I worked on writing realistic and attainable reading goals. We started calling this Monday Mindset. Cadence was enthusiastic about writing reading goals. Every week she set a reading goal with how many pages she wanted to read in her personal reading book. When she did not attain her goal, she became overly critical of herself stating, “I am lazy” or “I disappoint myself.” After completing daily assignments, she often asked me, “Did I do good?”

Additionally, to build her confidence, I made an effort to praise her and give specific ongoing feedback on her assignments during Read with Me sessions, Guided Reading or Snapshot Conversations before class. For instance, one morning when Cadence came to class, I asked her about her reading goal:

TEACHER: “Did you make your reading goal last night?”

CADENCE: “Yea, but I only read about five pages.”

TEACHER: “That’s okay. You read. Did you pause at your periods and commas?”

(Cadence looks up at me with a sly smile.)

TEACHER: “Keep practicing that. It will help your reading.”

In her Guided Reading book, my comments would be something like, “Cadence, I like how you were able to explain why you thought that was going to happen in the story” or “I like how you were using context clues to define this word” or “I am really proud of your effort today.” “You are making predictions. Now I want you to tell me why you think your prediction will happen. Support it with evidence.” Cadence needed encouragement and support systems in place to help her reframe how she viewed herself. However, getting her to accept her mistakes took time.

The Reading Process

Another strategy that I implemented with Cadence was discussing what is reading and what it means to be both an active and a passive reader. During one of our first Read with Me sessions, I talked with Cadence about our learning map, which is posted in the front of the classroom. The learning map identifies all the different components that work together

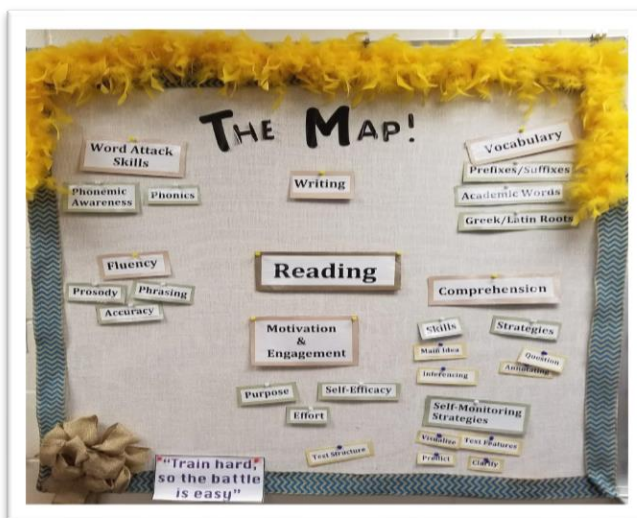


Figure 17: The Classroom Reading Map

simultaneously for reading comprehension to occur. I wanted Cadence to understand there is more to reading than speed. After sharing this map, we began to discuss becoming a more attentive reader by slowing her reading pace. During Guided Reading or Read with Me sessions, I had Cadence listen to me model reading at a slow pace or I asked her to read with me.

I also worked with Cadence on how to apply fix up strategies to help read the big words in text, as well as how to use active reading strategies, such as visualizing. During a Read with Me Session, our conversation went something like this:

TEACHER: “Hi, Cadence. Can you tell me the title of your book?”

CADENCE: “Paper Things.”

TEACHER: “And what page are you on?”

CADENCE: “169.”

TEACHER: “That’s great! The last time I read with you, you were on page eighty-nine. Okay. Why don’t you read a little bit to me? Remember we are working on using context clues to help us define words.” (Begins reading the text.) “Okay. You read that paragraph fluently. I liked that I could hear your expression. Let’s talk about this word.” (I point to the word persistence.) “Could you tell me how to pronounce this word?”

Cadence tries to decode the word but needs my help in breaking the word into syllables to pronounce it. Together, we break the word into its syllables parts, per/sis/tence, and practice blending it together. Then I have her reread the sentence with “persistence” and ask her to use context clues to tell me what she thinks the word means.

CADENCE: “Maybe it means to keep doing something?”

TEACHER: “Yea, I think that is a good meaning for this word.”

We share personal examples of when we wanted to stop doing something but pushed ourselves to continue.

A Reader’s Changed Literacy Story

Nine weeks from the initial Let’s Talk Conference, Cadence and I scheduled a

second Let's Talk Conference. During this conference, I wanted to check in with Cadence on her progress towards understanding what it means to be a good reader and building her confidence from being in a reading support class. First, I asked Cadence how she felt about her literacy progress. She told me, "I feel I have improved a lot. Just like when I need help you are trying to help me." I had Cadence elaborate on how she improved by telling me what makes someone a good reader: "Okay, so, you are a good reader you are like fluent and you can understand it and you like can picture it and get lost inside of the book, like you don't notice what is around you because you are in the book." (Let's Talk Conference, January 12, 2018).

Cadence was able to explain that a good reader does more than read with automaticity but is someone who uses reading strategies to help her comprehend and get lost in the pages of the book. Her understanding of what is a good reader shifted from someone who reads fast to someone who uses active reading strategies. I observed her progress in applying active reading strategies during Guided Reading. When she first started to learn how to slow her reading down and be a more active reader, she was not using all of the active reading strategies nor was she explaining her thoughts. The first Guided Reading example, shown in Figure 18, demonstrates her attempts at applying the reading strategy but not using the strategy correctly. For instance, on her predictions, while she stated a prediction she was unable to explain her prediction with text evidence. Throughout the school year, as Cadence continued to have more practice with applying active reading strategies, she not only began to employ all of the seven active reading strategies but also used them correctly. Please see Figure 19. Cadence had grasped the concept of using each active reading strategy, which led to her automatically applying the


Date(s): 3-6-18	
Title: <u>Is the News Teen Heroes</u>	
Before Reading	
Set Purpose (make predictions): Question: <u>Why is it called teen heroes? And how would they be heroes?</u> Conclusion:	
During Reading	
<p>* Visualizations: @ smoke</p> 	<p>* Predictions: I predict that the book will be about her having a lot of adventures and being a hero. I would like to read it. I would like to know what happens in the book. I would like to know what the book is about. I would like to know what the book is about.</p>
<p>* Connections: text to world When I read the first chapter, I made me think of all the other heroes who risk their lives to save others.</p>	<p>* Questions: I wonder why it's called "Dragon Slayer"?</p>
<p>* Clarifying: emergency trauma technician</p>	<p>* Inferences: I infer that the news are heroes and medicals. I infer that the news are heroes and medicals. I infer that the news are heroes and medicals. I infer that the news are heroes and medicals.</p>
After Reading	
<p>* Summary: Monday December 11th in Anaf, Alaska. Aired on the news. He is 15 and wanted to be a Dragon Slayer. He is a fighter. He wanted to be a Dragon Slayer. He wanted to be a Dragon Slayer. He wanted to be a Dragon Slayer.</p>	
<p>* Reactions/Thoughts: I thought it was a good passage and I would love to read it or become one. I thought it was a good passage and I would love to read it or become one. I thought it was a good passage and I would love to read it or become one.</p>	
<p>Com' Wow! This is beautiful! Lots of effort here!</p>	

Figure 18: Cadence's initial Guided Reading

Figure 19: Cadence's progression as active reader

Cadence also recognized what to do when she doesn't understand a word in the text. She stated when "I don't exactly know a word or two, [I] forget what I am reading and what it is talking about." However, instead of continuing with reading, she says, "If I don't know the words, I'll look at the words around it and try to figure out the definition. "When we are in science and reading all together, I will try to keep up and use the dictionary in the back of the book." I was excited that she was applying the strategies not only to her reading during our class but also transferring what she learned to other classes. Oftentimes, students do not see the reading skills and strategies that they learn in a reading support class as transferable to content area classes. Teachers need to consistently tell students to apply what they are learning to other classes in order for

students to recognize the benefit of taking what they are learning in one class to the other.

Communicating to students how to transfer learning strategies from one class to another can be as simple as saying, “I want you to use this strategy in your social studies class today to help you understand what you are reading.” In doing so, we help students create more positive literacy experiences between classes, which aides a sense of self-authority.

Moving Forward

Cadence needed to see herself as a reader. She needed to have more confidence in herself and understand what type of reader she was in order to progress in her literacy skills. My follow-up plan with Cadence included continuing to work with her on using active reading strategies when reading during Guided Reading and Read with Me sessions. I wanted her to automatically apply each of the seven strategies⁴ when reading and push her to think more critically about what she was reading. I also continued to monitor the moments when she was too hard on herself. I offered her support and encouragement by pointing out the positive things she was doing and highlighted the progress she was making. When she did not meet a goal, I worked with her to problem solve and reflect on why she thought she did not make her goal. Mostly, Cadence needed to see that I cared about her learning.

⁴The seven active reading strategies include: clarifying, visualizing, predicting, asking questions, making inferences, summarizing and making connections.

Pause & Reflect

Please take a moment to think about these questions:

- 1. What components can you take back to your classroom after reading Cadence's story?*
- 2. What are your most powerful insights about teaching struggling readers from reading Cadence's story?*
- 3. What burning questions do you have?*

CONCLUSION

SO, WHAT?

The literacy stories of Gigi, Parker, Brandon, and Cadence matter as they ultimately teach educators to support student literacy needs in an innovative way. When we pause, listen to student voice, and use that information to adjust our teaching practices, we learn how to best help students.

Common themes emerged from the literacy stories of these four students. First, Gigi, Parker, Brandon, and Cadence believed literacy was important. Three of the students, Gigi, Parker, and Brandon reported positive home literacy environments with supportive families. Though Cadence did not grow up in the same literacy-rich background, she did reflect on the importance of literacy in her own way. Gigi's positive enthusiasm for literacy stemmed from her parents instilling in her a mindset that reading is essential for future success. At home, Gigi watched her parents participate in literacy experiences, such as reading the newspaper and the sharing of oral stories. Similarly, Parker had learned to enjoy reading because he saw his dad reading Stephen King books. He was encouraged to read every night at home by his parents. Brandon's home literacy experiences helped him understand the importance of reading in his daily life and in the future when he gets a job. His mom encouraged positive literacy experiences by reading and interacting with the Bible every night. Cadence, however, did not remember her mom reading to her when she was younger and talked about the absence of literacy present in her home environment. She was also the only one who struggled with a negative self-concept. Although, Cadence did not share in positive at home literacy experiences as Gigi, Parker and Brandon, she was a determined learner who recognized the importance of reading in order to get a desirable job.

What makes the literacy stories of Gigi, Parker, Brandon, and Cadence interesting is that whatever reading strategies were tried in the past, they did not aide the students enough to support their literacy needs and push them out of reading intervention. The students needed a different instructional approach that was not being offered by teachers or the schools. Gigi, Parker, and Brandon were all supported in their past by the school system. Their need for additional literacy support was not overlooked. They had received reading support up to their seventh-grade year. All three students were enrolled in a reading intervention class as a sixth grader. Brandon and Parker received additional reading support throughout elementary. Cadance, however, was not previously enrolled in a reading support class until her seventh-grade year. Her frustrations with being in a reading support class as a seventh grader contributed to her negative self-concept.

When I paused and listened to my students' needs, I uncovered their misconceptions about reading and what they needed from me to improve their literacy. For instance, Gigi had become a teacher-pleaser and thought a good reader was someone who read. She needed me to teach her the difference between an active and a passive reader and how to employ the use of fix up strategies to help her self-monitor and comprehend. Parker believed he was a good reader because he could read fluently. He had to learn to be a more careful reader and develop vocabulary awareness. Brandon, similar to Gigi, thought that reading a lot means you understand the words you are reading. I had to break his old reading habits of just reading the text and learn how to interact with the story. He needed encouragement through my specific feedback and praise. Cadence had to develop more confidence as a reader and understand how to use active reading strategies. She had a misconception similar to Parker that since she read

fast she was a good reader. Above all, I had to show them that I cared.

When I took the information that I had discovered about my students and adjusted my teaching instruction, I saw them grow as students and as readers. Gigi learned reading is thinking. Her reading experience became more optimistic. For Parker, he developed more vocabulary awareness. Reading became more than reading the words off the page, but rather thinking about what the words meant. With my ongoing encouragement and feedback, Brandon learned to automatically interact with text. He also became more comfortable asking for help when he needed my support. Cadence began to use active reading strategies to help her comprehend. She also grew in her self-confidence as a reader and learned to set more realistic goals. In the end, I worked with each student and together we changed his or her literacy story.

SHIFTING THE TEACHER MINDSET
PAUSE. *JUST* PAUSE.

Ding. Ding. First period was over. It. Was. Over. Feeling defeated, I stood in the middle of the classroom watching my seventh-grade students run out of the room. I heard a student shout in the hallway, “Ms. Malone is in a bad mood! Watch out!” Reading passages were tossed on the floor. Chairs shoved by tables. Pencils left unclaimed on tables. Whiteboards shoved back into the storage container. Tears dampened my cheeks. *What had just happened?*

Students entered the classroom that morning like it was an extra recess period. One student endlessly tried to fly his paper airplane. Two girls came in screaming and giggling. Another ran into the classroom tripping over a chair, which was followed by an outburst of laughter. During Guided Reading, I reminded Sarah not to tip her chair. She rolled her eyes and shouted, “Whatever!” I told her that she was rude and needed to learn how to be more respectful. The class had barely started, and she was not ready to learn.

I was eager to work with David during Guided Reading, as I had learned in a Let’s Talk Conference, he needed support with visualization. Instead of sketching his images inside his Guided Reading pages, David darkened the box with contrasting pencil marks. I glared at him and told him to stop being lazy and try. He abruptly stood, knocking his chair over. His fists were clenched at his side and his face became a deep red as he shouted at me, “You are making me so mad! Just get away from me! I hate this stupid class!” The classroom door slammed behind him. The silence David left behind as he exited was only interrupted by another student yelling, “You think you can change us, but you can’t! You don’t know us!”

That afternoon as I drove away from the school, I cried hard. I was upset with my students. I knew if my students were going to improve their literacy skills, they had to be engaged and motivated readers. It seemed like they were neither. Why would they not let me help them? During independent reading time, I observed many of my students lying on the floor, sitting in chairs, or squeezing into corners fake reading⁵ (Tovani, 2000). Their books were strewn on the floor, in laps, or on tables. Pages seldomly turned and faces tried to catch someone waiting to release a compressed laugh. Guided Reading books were scribbled in, doodled on without thought, indicating they were not using the reading strategies I was teaching them to be active readers.

Mostly, though, I was disappointed with myself. My passion for their learning and understanding their literacy stories was not coming across. Instead, every day was beginning to feel like a tireless game of managing behaviors: “Can you please sit in your seat?” “No, you cannot get a drink now.” “Why did you not bring a pencil, *again*?” I was losing and kept thinking of my student’s words, “You don’t know us.” But I did know them. I knew they struggled with reading and some words were difficult. I knew they could not get the pictures inside their heads and were unmotivated to learn how. What was I missing?

Teaching is rewarding, but it is not easy nor should it be done in isolation. Anthropologist Ann Fernandez and high school teacher Catherine Lutz in their book *Schooled - Ordinary, Extraordinary Teaching in an Age of Change* (2015) share fascinating insights on teaching and education, through the stories of nine teachers. They make it apparent the raw challenges educators face by explaining one-third of all new

⁵Fake Reading - the act of reading a text without comprehending what was read.

teachers leave the profession after three years and 46% leave within five years. To stay in the game, I have learned to share stories with colleagues. When I reached out to a colleague about my struggles with my students, her advice was to accept the mess and muddle through it instead of trying controlling the situation. It can be hard to approach teaching from a constructivist standpoint and allow our students to be actively involved in the learning process while we step back and take on more of a role as coach. My students were telling me during our Let's Talk Conference what was hard for them and how I could support them. I heard my students, but I was not changing my practice to fit what they needed. I was not pausing and readjusting.

When I let the mess happen and I listened to my students, I learned that listening mattered. Previously, I was not taking the time to pause and to *listen* to them. In my October 9, 2017, journal reflection, I began understanding the importance of changing my teaching moves:

Students are so eager to tell me their stories. Some talk so much. Today, I had to stop class because they could not focus. We sat in silence for five minutes. I am lost. I do not know what to do with some of these students. I feel so frustrated... Why does one student come to class everyday bubbling with so much energy to work hard and others do not? How do I get those kids hooked? It feels like a puzzle, and I have lost a piece. What am I doing? I feel tired. Tired of pushing, of encouraging, of motivating. But I know if I don't, who will? What will make them want to read? What will motivate them? What can I do to help them? Tomorrow, I try again. Tomorrow, I listen.

What Does It Mean to Pause?

When we pause, we accept what is happening in the moment. Pausing allows us to step back and strategize to get through the difficult moment. For instance, when my daughter is trying to solve a math problem and tosses her pencil across the kitchen table, we pause by thinking of different ways to solve the problem. My youngest daughter pauses when she feels frustrated by saying, “Peace in my mind, peace in my heart, peace in the world.” Pausing helps us approach the situation in a new way.

As a seasoned teacher, learning how to pause and not let the moment suffocate me was difficult. I blamed my students for not paying attention and not using the reading strategy I had tailored to their needs. I faulted parents for not playing a bigger role in students’ lives. Moments of exhaustion overshadowed the good things that were happening in my classroom, such as Paris who finished her first chapter book, Eric who worked through his behavior issues and was able to stay in reading class the entire period, or Gigi who told me she could see the character inside her mind. Pausing became an important component toward creating tailored literacy experiences for my students.

Learning to Pause

My older sister often tells me I am an entertainer. At first, I thought this was an absurd idea. I am a teacher not someone standing in the front of the class singing and dancing. Let’s pause here. Think back to the last conference or class lecture you attended. Was the speaker engaging? Perhaps you snuck out early or doodled on your notes or spent the time thinking about other things because you were not engaged?

A few years ago, I attended a reading conference to learn more about fluency habits of adolescent struggling readers. The speaker quickly captivated me. He walked

down the middle aisle and paced around the room. His face smiled, his arms outstretched, and in a loud booming voice he greeted us, “Good Morning!” His energy had the audience laughing, jotting down notes, asking questions, and taking moments to reflect on our own practices. His enthusiasm for reading fluency was transparent in his delivery. He did not speak in a monotone voice nor did he sit and click through endless PowerPoint slides. Instead, he walked around the room, his voice pulsating as he told us the importance of reading fluently. His presentation entertained me. I walked out of the room questioning the engagement of my lessons. I wanted to copy his lesson delivery for my students.

Teaching is a high-energy performance, where lesson preparation and delivery matters to student learning. Mike Schmoker in his article titled *The Lost Art of Teaching Soundly Structured Lessons* (2013) adds to the importance of implementing effective lessons. When students are supported with three years consecutively of highly effective instruction they will make learning gains between 35% to 50%. Lessons should be structured and focused with clearly stated learning objectives, modeling, independent practice, and formative checks with constant and ongoing feedback sprinkled throughout. Author, Katrina Schwartz understands the effects lesson preparation has on student learning success but she also realizes the realities educators encounter in integrating best practices. Her article titled *Why Teachers Should Be Trained Like Actors* (2013) shows that unfortunately, unlike other performers who spend hours crafting their delivery, teachers attend professional development opportunities and are given best practices to implement and reflect on with little time to practice their performance in real-time. Proficiency is reached through practice, through failure and real-time feedback. Having

no opportunities to practice the approaches we know are effective, we often fall back to feeding the seals, rather than controlling and managing the art of our performance.

Pausing taught me that my teaching moves (the way I conduct myself, the delivery of my lessons, and my responses) can alter my teaching performance and ultimately change the classroom environment and student learning. While this may seem obvious, I had to consciously remind myself to pause when I experienced moments of frustration with my students or with my teaching performance. When I feel myself becoming frustrated, I consciously say, “Pause.” Reflect on the situation. Why isn’t Eric responding? I first look at my teaching moves and myself. How did I approach Eric? What am I asking him to do? What is my mindset? In this process, two types of pauses eventually emerged: (1) a teacher-focused pause and (2) a student-focused pause.

Teacher-focused pause

I found myself pausing when I was physically present in the classroom but not mentally. My attitude and emotions affected my performance and caused students such as, Eric to not respond to me or the assignment because of my tone and my words. The following is a journal reflection on January 25, 2018:

The morning was already off to an unfair start. I was tired from staying up late.

Trying to get my daughters ready for school was tiring. *Do you have socks?*

Where is your hat? Did you put your homework in your bookbag? When I arrived

at school, I learned that I had to class cover, so I would not have plan time. I was

exhausted and the day hadn’t begun. When my first period students rushed in,

behavior that normally would not bother me did: Brandon staring at the window,

the girls giggling. “Students, please sit down.” They sensed the absence of my

normal high-energy performance and began to emulate my emotional state. When I raised my voice at a student for not bringing a pencil over to Guided Reading. I paused. Our class felt tense, learning was not occurring. I told my students, I was having a rough start and needed a moment to step back and regroup. I apologized to them and a student said, “It’s okay, Ms. Malone. We all have these kinds of days.” I could have continued to teach, but I paused. Pausing taught my students that it’s okay to have bad days but to recognize when to take a step back.

Student-focused pause

A student-focused pause occurred when a student was not responding to me, and I was present. The problems usually stemmed from missing literacy skills or a missing life skill.⁶ An example of a student-focused pause from my journal reflection on January 18, 2018 follows:

When the bell rings indicating the start of a class period, my performance begins. I stand at my classroom door excitedly greeting my first period students with “hello’s,” high-five’s, and quick reminders, such as “Do you have a pencil?” “Where is your personal reading book?” “Remember, today we are whisper reading together.” Sarah runs into the classroom. Her red hoodie is pulled up over her head. I sigh. She knows it is school policy to not have her hoody up. She slams her books on the table and proceeds to put her head down. I can either tell Sarah to follow school policy and put her hoody down or pause. When I choose to pause, I discover Sarah is upset because her grandmother died. Pausing avoided

⁶A missing life skill involves three life goals derived from the Behavioral Intervention Support Team (BIST) Model: 1) I can be okay even if others are not okay; 2) I can do something even if I do not want to (or even if it’s hard); and 3) I can make good choices even if I am having overwhelming feelings.

aggravating the situation and helped me coach Sarah on what to do when we have to perform but are experiencing overwhelming feelings.

My classroom did not transform overnight and learning between teacher and student did not occur seamlessly either. I remember writing in my journal the day I first felt myself pause:

November 14, 2017

I am smiling big as I write this. Days like today rejuvenate me as teacher.

Today, I paused. I paused! I called home and explained what happened in class. His mom, when I spoke on the phone with her, was in the hospital.

Her phone was shut off. I was thinking this whole time that his parents did not care since they never called me back. One of the best things that I am learning from all of this is how to be more patient with my students - to pause before I become quick to judge why they are being reluctant.

Because *I* don't know.

I was learning to pause and to "listen to the message rather than look for errors," - guidance Lucy Calkins offers in her book *Lessons from a Child: On the Teaching and Learning of Writing* (1983). In doing so, I was discovering what was buried underneath their voices. I adjusted my tone, reflected on my biases, and adapted my teaching moves to help my students, rather than teaching the same way. When I started to pause during moments, such as when a student tossed his pencil, told me the assignment was stupid, or refused to lift his head from the desk, I began to see how my teaching moves could make a difference in their learning and change our classroom community. Listening to their voice was a part of discovering their story; my teaching performance was the catalyst to

change their literacy journey. Students noticed my shifting mindset, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

When my first period seventh graders shuffled sleepily into the classroom, I was prepared to share with them some advice my neighbor gave me over the weekend. Students looked at me questioningly as I sat in the blue chair placed in the center of the room. After the bell rang I told them, “I want to tell you a story today.” I heard groans throughout the room and a student shouted, “We are not in Kindergarten, Miss.” My response was that it was not that kind of story. When I had their attention, I began, “I cried hard over the weekend. I got really frustrated with my writing and every time I thought of all the things I had to do - laundry, house cleaning or the things I could be doing with my family, I became more frustrated. So, I went outside and played with my dog. My neighbor, who was also outside taking his trash out, asked me how I was doing. I told him that I was not having a good day and shared my frustrations with writing. He listened to me and then said, “I want you to remember from my country we say ‘Train hard so the battle is easy.’” In that moment, I just needed someone to listen. He had done just that and, in the process, he even offered words of encouragement.

Our students need us to listen to them. They need our words of encouragement and support. I told my students that his words got me out of my funk. I wanted them to remember his words, too as a reminder to work hard and not give up on themselves.

When I finished, Amy raised her hand, “Ms. Malone, think of your one word. Pause!”

FINAL REMARKS

In my classroom, I use stories to keep my students engaged and entertained. Once I told my seventh-grade reading intervention class about a conversation I had with my eight-year-old daughter. The conversation between my daughter (Schyler) and I went something like this:

ME: “Babe, do you ever get tired when you are swimming out in the middle of the pool?”

SCHYLER: “No.”

ME: “Well, if you did, what would you do? Would you yell for your teacher?”

(Long Pause.)

SCHYLER: “Mom, if you were out in the middle of an ocean and saw a shark what would you do?”

ME: “Well, uh, I would use all of my strength to swim away.”

SCHYLER: “That's what I would do then; I would find it in me to make it to safety.”

ME: “But, what happens if you cannot?”

SCHYLER: “Mom, you just have to. You have to dig deep inside of you, otherwise you will not make it.”

Her particular remark has been a guiding post for me as a teacher and as an individual. What I have discovered is that when we dig deep, we uncover what has been unnoticed. It is my hope that this book transforms your way of thinking about your students. May this book be your guiding post to dig deep, to pause more, to listen deeply, so you can discover your students’ stories. May it affirm what you are currently doing in

your classroom practice and challenge or adjust your thinking to implement new approaches to teaching struggling readers. They need us to change their literacy story.

EPILOGUE

I am gathering papers left on tables. When I look up Ms. Brielle is in my classroom doorway.

“Hey! How was your morning?” I say tossing the papers in the recycling bin.

Although, Ms. Brielle and I have only known each other for two years, we have become friends.

She slumps into a yellow chair and lets out a loud sigh.

“Guided reading.” She says, waving her arms in the air.

I take a seat next to her.

“What’s going on?”

“It’s becoming stagnant. Even though I am working in a small group, it doesn’t seem as supportive as it could be. It feels like I am still doing too much whole group.”

“Can I share with you what I am doing for guided reading?”

“Yes, please! I need something different.”

I share with Ms. Brielle, how I have setup my guided reading routine, which the majority of the time being spent with students independently reading. I explain my role in sitting next to each student working with them on the reading strategy they indicated they need help with. When she left my room, she was eager to implement the change to her guiding reading routine.

The following day, I am startled by Ms. Brielle’s booming voice, as she entered my classroom.

“Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh!”

You switched your guided reading routine, didn’t you?” I ask, smiling.

“Yes! Switching to your routine made guided reading feel like I was actually supporting what my students needed. And I didn’t have any behaviors today! It worked. I just can’t believe it!”

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APPENDIX A
Sample Student Letter of Assent

IRB #: 17510

Formal Study Title: *“I Don’t Read No Books.” How Teachers Can Use Students’ Literacy Stories to Change Literacy Lives*

Principal Investigator: Stephanie J. Malone Cell: (402) 309-9181

Key Information:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- The researcher, Stephanie Malone will conduct up to three interviews with you between September and December. The interview will include questions about your personal background and reading history, what you currently know about reading and what type of reader you want to become. The interview will take up to thirty minutes and will be conducted during the school day, during normal class instruction or during your lunch.
- With your permission, the researcher, Stephanie Malone will audio record and transcribe the interviews.
- The researcher, Stephanie Malone will also observe you during Reading Elements to learn more about you as a reader.
- You will select as pseudonym (fake name) name, and all the information you share will be under this pseudonym name. Your identity will be protected at all times, in written reports and or discussions.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

I am inviting you to take part in my research study on discovering student stories. I am asking you to participate because I feel you would be a strong participant and I am interested in discovering your story.

What will be done during this research study?

This research will last twelve weeks. You will be asked to participate in three interviews. One will take place at the start of the study; the second interview will occur in the middle of the study and the final interview will occur at the end of the study. I will also be observing you during classroom instruction time to learn more about you as a reader.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

There are no known risks to you from being in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to you?

Being in the study will not have direct benefits to you, but it may help researchers and teachers understand how to discover student stories to improve student learning.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

No compensation will be provided.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data.

Your identity will remain confidential under the pseudonym name you select. The records of this study will be kept in a secured file; only Stephanie Malone will have access to. Tape-recorded interviews will be destroyed after it has been transcribed.

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. You will receive the same instruction regardless of your participation in the study.

Documentation of informed consent

We will also ask your parents/legal guardian for their permission for you to do this study. Please talk this over with them before you decide whether or not to participate.

If you have any questions at this time, please ask me.

Participant Signature:

(Signature of Subject)	Date

Investigator Signature:

(Signature of Subject)	Date

APPENDIX B
Sample Parent/Guardian Letter of Consent

IRB #: 17510

Formal Study Title: *“I Don’t Read No Books.” How Teachers Can Use Students’ Literacy Stories to Change Literacy Lives*

Principal Investigator: Stephanie J. Malone Cell (402) 309-9181

Key Information:

If you agree that your student may participate in this study, the project will involve:

- The researcher, Stephanie Malone will conduct up to three interviews with your student between September and December. The interview will include questions about your student’s personal background and reading history, what he or she currently knows about reading and what type of reader he or she wants to become. The interview will take up to thirty minutes and will be conducted during the school day.
- With your permission, the researcher, Stephanie Malone will audio record and transcribe the interviews.
- The researcher, Stephanie Malone will also observe your student in class to learn more about them as a reader.
- Your student will select as pseudonym (fake name) name, and all the information they share will be under this pseudonym name. Your student’s identity will be protected at all times, in written reports and or discussions.

Invitation

Your student is invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not they may participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why is your student being asked to be in this research study?

Your student is being asked to be in this study because they are enrolled in a reading support class and I am interested in discovering your student’s story.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

The purpose of my research study is to provide more awareness to literacy by encouraging educators to listen to and discover the stories of readers and use those stories to inform instructional practice. I will be conducting a narrative inquiry study to collect information focused around: (1) the past – the student’s personal background and his or

her reading history; (2) the present – the student’s current reading knowledge and reaction to sharing his or her story; and (3) the future - the student’s vision of the type of reader he or she wants to become. The information, I collect will be represented in a book, entitled “*I Don’t Read No Books.*” *How Teachers Can Use Students’ Literacy Stories to Change Literacy Lives*, which will examine the topic of readers and their experiences with reading.

What will be done during this research study?

This research will last twelve weeks. Your student will be asked to participate in three interviews. One will take place at the start of the study; the second interview will occur in the middle of the study and the final interview will occur at the end of the study. I will also be observing your student during classroom instruction time to learn more about them as a reader.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

There are no known risks to your student from being in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to your [child/legal] ward?

Being in the study will not have direct benefits to your student.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

Your student’s participation may help researchers and teachers understand how to discover student stories to improve student learning in the field of education.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Instead of being in this research study, you can choose not to allow your student to participate.

What will being in this research study cost you or your student?

There is no cost to you or your student to be in this research study.

Will your student be compensated for being in this research study?

Your student will not be compensated for their participation in this study.

What should you do if your student has a problem during this research study?

Your student’s welfare is the major concern. If there is a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact me.

How will information about your student be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect the privacy and the confidentiality of your student's study data. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by Stephanie Malone during the study and for three years after the study is complete. The data will also be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for three years after the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your student's research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law or contract. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your students' rights as a research subject?

Your student may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

- Phone: 1(402)472-6965
- Email: irb@unl.edu

What will happen if you decide not allow your student to be in this research study or decide they need to stop participating once they start?

You can decide your student should not to be in this research study, or you can have your student stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to allow your student to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect you or your student's relationship with the investigator or with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily deciding whether or not to allow your student to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions

answered and (4) you have decided to allow your student to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Name of Student to be included:

(Name of Student: Please print)

Parent/Legal Guardian Name:

(Name of Parent/Legal Guardian: Please print)

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature:

(Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian)

Date

APPENDIX C
Sample Letter of Invitation

Date:

Dear _____,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research study on discovering student stories. Your input will provide me with important information to write my book.

I am excited to have the opportunity to learn from you.

Our first interview will be scheduled in early September.

Your Teacher,

Ms. Malone

Stephanie J. Malone
Doctoral Candidate
Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education
University of Nebraska - Lincoln

APPENDIX D
Sample Interview Questions

PERIOD _

STUDENT NAME:

DATE OF CONFERENCE:

Let's Talk Conference

What do you to do in your spare time?

What clubs, organizations, or activities do you participate in?

Tell me about your reading habits. What types of books do you read? Do you have any favorite books or authors?

How long have you been in a reading support class?

How often do you read? What type of reading do you do in the summer?

Tell me about your family's reading habits. How often do your parents or someone in your home read to you?

How does reading make you feel?

Describe yourself as a reader.

How would you describe someone who is an active reader? (good reader)?

How do you know you understand what you are reading?

What do you do when you don't understand what you are reading?

What kind of reader do you see yourself as in the future?

Why is reading important?

(Other Comments/Notes):

APPENDIX E
Let’s Talk Conference Sign Up Sheet & Pass Reminder

Let’s Talk Sign Up Sheet

In Class

Monday

Wednesday

Tuesday

Friday

Thursday

Lunch Time

Name	Date	Your Lunch Hour

Pass Reminder

Pass Reminder

(Student name)

Date:

Time:

What: Let's Talk

Location:

APPENDIX F
Student Read with Me Schedules and
Student Personal Reading Conference Log

Read with Me Schedule ____ Quarter

Week Of: _____

Date	Student	Targeted Strategy/Intervention
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

Week Of: _____

Date	Student	Targeted Strategy/Intervention
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

PERIOD:
STUDENT NAME

Read with Me Quarter ____
Student Personal Reading Conference Log

Conference Focus:

- **Pep Talk** (Motivate and Engage)
- **Reading Fluency** (Prosody, Pace, Phrasing, Accuracy)
- **Vocabulary Awareness** (using context clues, identifying word parts)
- **Strategy Focus:**
 - Visualization,
 - Predicting,
 - Summarizing/Main Idea,
 - Making Connections,
 - Making Inferences,
 - Monitoring Comprehension,
 - Clarifying, Asking Questions)

Date:

Student is Reading: _____ **and is on page** _____

Teacher Feedback/Notes
Student's Notes
Focus Goal

APPENDIX G
Guided Reading Lesson Plan Template

Guided Reading Lesson Plan

PERIOD _____

GROUP _____

Before Reading

DAY:		TEXT PASSAGE:
Learning Objective/ Essential Question		
Teaching Target (what information do students need?)		
Student Reminders (what do I want students to remember when reading?)		

***During Reading**

[Students Read, Teacher works with individual students]

After Reading

Students Share reactions/questions

Teacher Notes

During Reading

[Students Read, Teacher works with individual students on focused strategy/intervention]

Student Name:	
Strategy/Intervention Focus	
Teacher Notes	
Student's Notes	
Goal Focus:	

Student Name:	
Strategy/Intervention Focus	
Teacher Notes	
Student's Notes	
Goal Focus:	

Student Name:	
Strategy/Intervention Focus	
Teacher Notes	
Student's Notes	
Goal Focus:	

Student Name:	
Strategy/Intervention Focus	
Teacher Notes	
Student's Notes	
Goal Focus:	

Student Name:	
Strategy/Intervention Focus	
Teacher Notes	
Student's Notes	
Goal Focus:	

Student Name:	
Strategy/Intervention Focus	
Teacher Notes	
Student's Notes	
Goal Focus:	

APPENDIX H
Guided Reading Student Booklet⁷

**THIS
GUIDED READING BOOK
BELONGS TO**

(Your Name)

⁷ This resource was created with colleague, Ms. Emily Rejda

GUIDE TO GUIDED READING STRATEGIES

Prediction: states what will happen next and is supported by evidence

I predict... (state prediction) ...***because...***(explanation/evidence).

*Do not use “because of the title” or “because of the pictures” as an explanation.

<p>Connection: when the text makes you think of something else you already know</p> <p>Text-to-self (TS): relate to your own life</p> <p>Text-to-text (TT): relate to another text/media</p> <p>Text-to-world (TW): think of something happening in the world around you</p> <p>Connection should include:</p> <p>Text: quote/describe section of the text</p> <p>Connection: what is the connection</p> <p>Explain: explain the relationship and connection to the text</p>	<p>Question: wondering about the text</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Red</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think.... • Why would... • How could... • What if.../What would have happened... • I wonder why... <p style="text-align: center;">Yellow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the effects... • What factors caused... • What were the differences... • What were the similarities... <p style="text-align: center;">Green</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When... • Where... • Who... • What... • How...
<p style="text-align: center;">FIX UPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Reread (with purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Make Connections <input type="checkbox"/> Highlight Things to Look Up <input type="checkbox"/> Visualize <input type="checkbox"/> Ask Questions <input type="checkbox"/> Continue Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Skip and Go Back <input type="checkbox"/> Say It or Read It Out Loud <input type="checkbox"/> Ask Someone 	<p>Inference: a conclusion that you draw about something by using evidence and prior knowledge</p> <p><i>According to the text...</i>(evidence/quote) ...</p> <p><i>I infer...</i>(conclusion/inference) ...</p> <p><i>because...</i> (background knowledge/explanation).</p>

Summary: telling or writing main ideas in your own words

Are you reading

fiction or nonfiction?

SWBST	GIST
<p>Somebody... (who is the main character?)</p> <p>Wanted... (what did the main character want?)</p> <p>But... (what was the problem?)</p> <p>So... (how did the main character try to solve the problem?)</p> <p>Then... (how was the problem solved?)</p>	<p>When: when did the “what” take place? (date/ time)</p> <p>Where: where did the “what” take place? (setting)</p> <p>Who: the most important person/topic</p> <p>What: the action that’s being explained</p> <p>Why: why did the “what” happen?</p>

BHH

Heart...

What did I learn about me?

How will this help me to be better?

How did this make me feel?

GRADING

Commendable	Satisfactory +	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Reader uses all seven comprehension strategies correctly.	Reader uses all seven strategies with only one strategy being incomplete or inaccurate.	Reader uses all seven strategies with only two strategies being incomplete or inaccurate.	<p>Reads uses all seven strategies with only three or more being incomplete or inaccurate.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Reader does not complete strategy boxes.</p>

Before Reading:

Set Purpose (make prediction):

Question:

Connection:

During Reading:

Visualizations:	Predictions: Confirm/Reject: Why?
Connections:	Questions:
Clarifying:	Inferences:

After Reading:

Summary:
Reactions/Thoughts:

APPENDIX I BOOKMATCH

(Adapted from Wutz & Wedwick, 2005)

B

Book Length

- Is this a good length for me?
- Is it too little, just right, or too much?
- Do I feel like committing to this book?

O

Ordinary Language

- Turn to any page and read aloud.
- Does it sound natural?
- Does it flow? Does it make sense?

O

Organization

- How is the book structured?
- Am I comfortable with the print size and number of words on a page?
- Are chapters short or long?

K

Knowledge prior to book

- Read the title, view the cover page, or read the summary on the back of the book.
- What do I already know about this topic, author, or illustrator?

M

Manageable Text

- Begin reading the book.
- Are the words easy, just right, or hard?
- Do I understand what I read?

A

Appeal to genre

- What is the genre?
- Have I read this genre before?
- Do I like or expect to like this genre?

T

Topic appropriateness

- Am I comfortable with the topic of this book?
- Do I feel like I am ready to read about this topic?

C

Connection

- Can I relate to this book?
- Does this book remind me of anything or anyone?

H

High Interest

- Am I interested in the topic of this book?
- Am I interested in the author/illustrator?
- Do others recommend this book?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

active reader:

a reader who automatically engages with the text by making predictions, asking questions, visualizing, inferring, making connections, summarizing, and repairs comprehension when confusion occurs

active reading strategies:

seven strategies that active readers employ when reading and include: clarifying, visualizing, predicting, asking questions, making inferences, summarizing and making connections

affective struggle:

a lack of engagement, motivation, or self-efficacy towards a situation

beach chats:

informal conversations between teacher and student, as a method to discover a student's literacy story

coding the text:

using the highlighting strategy to help students annotate text, so thinking is made visible

choral read + sum it up:

an instructional strategy to engage all students in reading the text out loud followed by summarizing what was read

conferencing:

the act of talking to students to discover their literacy needs

effective literacy instruction:

implementing instructional components that promote learning growth

engagement:

to be fully present in the learning environment

fix-up strategies:

reading comprehension strategies that help a reader repair confusion

independent strategy practice:

a time for students to work on reading skills and strategies independently

individualized educational plan:

a written statement that documents the individualized educational program for each child receiving special education services

intrinsic motivation:

behavior driven by internal feelings

let's talk conference:

a student-teacher conference that allows the teacher to uncover a student's literacy story

literacy analysis:

the process of looking for common themes or patterns to uncover a student's literacy story

make thinking visible:

to write down what is happening inside the learner's mind when reading

pause:

to take a step back and reflect on the situation

passive reader:

a reader who does not self-monitor and continues to read, even though comprehension is not taking place

personal reading:

a time set aside for students to independently read self-selected books at the beginning of class. The term personal reading is an educational practice that has become part of the classroom language despite its problematic grammar

reading intervention:

a remedial reading class, that supports students reading below grade level through comprehension skills and reading strategies

read with me session:

additional support where the teacher works with the student on their focus strategy or intervention while the student is reading their self-selected book during personal reading time

reluctant student:

a student who unwilling participates in learning

self-efficacy:

an individual's belief in their ability to lead

snapshot conversations:

brief moments at the beginning, middle, or end of the class when the teacher checks in with students about their strategy focus

student-focused pause:

occurs when a student is not responding to the teacher when the teacher is mindfully present

struggling reader:

a learner performing below grade level in literacy

teacher-focused pause:

a moment when the teacher needs to step back in the classroom because personal attitude and emotions are affecting teaching performance and student learning

think aloud:

the process of making thinking the teacher's thoughts when reading visible to students

word callers:

the learner decodes words but does not comprehend what is being read